

COMPASSION CULTIVATION TRAINING PROGRAM

*An Eight-Week Course
on
Cultivating Compassionate Heart and Mind*



INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE)
Stanford University, 2013

COMPASSION CULTIVATION TRAINING (CCT)

*An Eight-Week Course
on
Cultivating Compassionate Heart and Mind*



INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

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Letter from the Director

The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) is comprised of a multi-disciplinary team of scientists and scholars at Stanford University whose goal is to bring the tools of psychology and neuroscience to the study of empathy, compassion and altruism. While the scientific understanding of these complex behaviors is itself a noble and worthy goal, ultimately such work would be of little value unless the knowledge gained could be utilized for the benefit of not only the scientific community but for society as a whole. The ultimate goal of these efforts is to create tools that individuals can use to develop and cultivate such behaviors within themselves.

The creation of CCARE began with conversations with my colleagues regarding my personal interest in this area and desire to rigorously study these mental qualities and behaviors in a multi-disciplinary fashion. Ultimately, this interest led to a meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, regarding not only his interest in the intersection of contemplative practice and neuroscience, but more importantly in compassion and altruism. Following this conversation, His Holiness agreed to visit Stanford to give a public lecture on compassion but also spontaneously offered a donation to support this work, the largest donation he has ever given to a non-Tibetan cause.

Following this meeting, CCARE was formally created as a Center within the Stanford Institute of Neuro-Innovation and Translational Neuroscience at Stanford University School of Medicine. Presently, CCARE is involved in a number of scientific studies ranging from the use of optogenetics in rodents to understand the neural circuitry associated with nurturing, to the use of neuro-economic models to understand the determinants of altruistic giving, to the use of fMRI and other psychological measures to determine the effects of this *Compassion Cultivation Training* (CCT) protocol on the development of compassion in individuals. Throughout these explorations, my colleagues and Stanford University have been immensely supportive and enthusiastic of CCARE's mission.

The CCT protocol was primarily developed by my friend and colleague, Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., CCARE Visiting Scholar at Stanford University School of Medicine, with contributions by many colleagues with neuroscience, psychology and contemplative backgrounds. Jinpa's background as a former Buddhist monk and an individual who has been intimately involved with the field of contemplative neuroscience proved invaluable in the development of both the protocol and this CCT Instructor's Manual. While I have no doubt that the CCT protocol will continue to be refined over time, I am hopeful that its value as a tool to cultivate compassion in individuals will be demonstrated.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, "the cultivation of compassion is no longer a luxury but a necessity if our species is to survive." It is our hope that this protocol can be a small contribution to this effort.

James R. Doty, M.D.
Founder and Director

Preface

The materials in this manual present a systematic eight-week program called *Compassion Cultivation Training* (CCT), which is aimed at developing a compassionate mind and heart. This manual has been designed to be used only by trained instructors who, in addition to the relevant academic qualifications (especially some background in psychology), have intimate familiarity with the contemplative practices associated with cultivating compassion. The course consists of a 2-hour session once every week during the eight-week period, with each class composed of (a) pedagogical instruction, including active group discussion, (b) a guided group meditation, (c) interactive practical exercises related to the specific theme of the week, and (d) “moistening” of the heart, either through reading poetry or through reflecting on or viewing inspiring stories.

Although there are six steps in the CCT program, the course is spread over eight weeks because step 3 is divided into two subsets (compassion for oneself and loving-kindness for oneself) and the eighth and final week is dedicated to an integrated daily compassion practice. The format of this instructor’s manual follows the pattern of the proposed eight-week course, with a chapter for each of the eight weeks. Each chapter begins with an overview of the theme of that week and a class plan, followed by specific components of the course, such as the instruction on a specific exercise and the script for the guided group meditation. Further resources for the instructor include (a) a selection of short stories, and (b) a collection of selected poetry. The instructor can use these in the class as he or she deems appropriate.

This protocol on the CCT program was developed under the auspices of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) at the Stanford Institute for Neuro-Innovation and Translational Neuroscience (SINITN), Stanford University. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to CCARE’s director, Dr. James R. Doty, for his vision, enthusiasm, and leadership, which made CCARE a reality. I would also like to thank Dr. Phil Pizzo, the dean of Stanford Medical School, and Dr. Gary Steinberg, the director of SINITN and chair of the Neurosurgery Department, Stanford Medical School, for their leadership and support of CCARE and its work. I owe gratitude to many people whose help in the development of this protocol has been important. I thank Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi for sharing with me his six-week undergraduate course on compassion developed for Emory University; Jonathan Landaw for his numerous careful observations on an earlier draft of the meditation scripts presented in this manual; my colleagues B. Alan Wallace, Matthieu Ricard, and John Dunne for their critical comments; and my wife Sophie B. Langri for insights from her training in Nonviolent Communication (NVC). I would especially like to thank Erika Rosenberg, Kelly McGonigal, Kelly Werner, Margaret Cullen, Philippe Goldin, and Wiveka Ramel, who participated extensively as a group in discussions related to the standardization of this protocol, including selecting the resources essential for conducting this eight-week course. Their generous and rich contribution shaped CCT into the program I had truly hoped for. I thank David and K. C. Kelly for their warm hospitality in Woodside, California, where I did much of the writing; last but not least, I thank Joel Finkelstein and Oona Buckley, CCARE’s two amazing coordinators, for all their enthusiasm, belief, and help throughout all the stages of preparing this document.

Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

What follows is a step-by-step protocol developed specifically for the cultivation of compassion – the genuine wish for others to be relieved from their suffering. Broadly defined, we understand **compassion** to be a multidimensional process, the key components of which are (1) an *awareness* of suffering in others (cognitive/empathetic), (2) *sympathetic concern* related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective), (3) a *wish* to see the relief of that suffering (intentional), and (4) a *responsiveness* or readiness to help relieve that suffering (motivational). Thus we view compassion as a combination of a cognitive perspective and an affective state that gives rise to cooperative and **altruistic** behavior.

I. Structure of the Compassion Cultivation Program

This compassion cultivation protocol is designed to be implemented in the context of an eight-week course. The course proceeds on the basis of a 2-hour session once every week of the course, consisting of (a) **a guided group meditation, which is complemented with** (b) **pedagogical instruction, including active group discussion**, and (c) **various practical exercises related to the specific theme of the week associated with cultivating compassion**. During the period of this course, all participants are expected to undertake 15– (building up to) 30 minutes of daily meditation at home, on the basis of recorded guided meditation instructions that progress step by step, culminating in the meditation of the final week, which is an integrated practice. This last meditation instruction has been designed to be a daily compassion meditation for participants who wish to adopt it. In addition to these formal sitting meditations, the course participants should be instructed to also undertake informal, “in the world,” practices, whereby they can apply the particular themes of the week to everyday life situations.

The Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) program consists of six steps. Step 1 involves settling the mind and learning to focus it – basic skills essential for any form of reflective mental exercise. Steps 2 through 5 pertain to actual compassion cultivation. They are: *loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one* (Step 2); *loving-kindness and compassion for oneself* (Step 3); establishing the basis for compassion toward others by *embracing shared common humanity and appreciating the deep interconnectedness of self and others* (Step 4); and *compassion toward others*, including all beings (Step 5). These are followed by what could be called *active compassion practice* (Step 6), which involves imagining taking away others’ pain and sorrow and offering to them one’s own happiness, joy, and everything that is good. Finally, in week eight, the course presents an integrated practice where, on the basis of the practices of the preceding steps, a complete daily compassion meditation is presented.

The formal meditations presented in this protocol are principally derived from compassion practices found in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.ⁱ They have, however, been adapted to suit the sensibilities and requirements of a multicultural context and for use by people from diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Special care has been taken to ensure that the practices presented here are thoroughly nondenominational and secular.

It is expected that the contemplative approach to cultivating compassion presented in these meditations will be complemented by other important aspects of the whole compassion cultivation program. In conducting the course, instructors must therefore offer (a) some basic psychological education pertaining to the dynamic interactions between thoughts, emotions, and feelings, and their relation to one’s well-being; (b) a cognitive reorientation of outlook, so that there is a deeper recognition of the value of compassion, especially in relation to one’s own peace and happiness, healthy relations with others and the world, and so on; (c) “moistening” of the

heart through reading inspiring stories or poetry; (d) creative interactive practical exercises that could help evoke specific affective states relevant to the theme of a particular step of the compassion cultivation program (for example, these could include narrating a story and exploring how a compassionate response to specific events could unfold); and, finally, (e) opportunities for actual volunteer service, such as serving at a soup kitchen for the homeless, reading at a senior citizens' residence, or tutoring underprivileged children. (Please note that the references to time for the specific elements of the class, as well as individual steps in the meditation scripts, are suggestive and have been provided mainly to indicate the allocation of time to the specific elements in accordance with their priority within the compassion cultivation program.)

The practical aspects of how to conduct the classes of the CCT program are presented in detail in the specific chapters related to the individual sessions of the eight-week course. These chapters consists of, generally, (1) Overview and class plan; (2) Pedagogy focused on the specific theme of the class; (3) Description of selected practical exercises relevant to the theme of the class; (4) Meditation script to be used as a model for in-class guided meditations as well as a recording of a meditation to be followed on a daily basis during the week; and (5) Suggestions for informal, "in the world," practices that the course participants could apply in their everyday life situations during the week. The instructors are expected to provide one handout on the first day of the course, which, based on the pedagogical sections of this manual, outlines the overall structure of the course, as well as provides a suggested short reading list (which may need to be selected to suit the specific contexts in which the course is being taught). For the six subsequent weeks, instructors should prepare a one-page handout for each class (again based on the pedagogical sections and meditation scripts presented in this manual) that outlines in broad terms the specific steps in the key theme of the particular week, such as compassion and loving-kindness for a loved one, and so on. For the final week, if desired, the instructor may choose to provide a handout that presents the structure of a daily integrated meditation on compassion. Sample handouts can be found in the appendix of this volume. Instructors are also expected to provide meditation recordings for participants to use for their home practice. Scripts for these meditations can be accessed on the password-protected Teacher Training website. As new CCT teachers become more familiar with the provided material, they may wish to consult with Senior Teachers/supervisors regarding adaptations in language to meet the needs of their particular teaching setting.

II. Defining Compassion

At its most fundamental level, compassion can be seen as an expression of our basic mental faculty of *caring*. It is our natural capacity to care for our own welfare that serves as the basis for our ability to feel empathy for others. To feel such empathy, we must not only wish to be rid of our own pain and suffering but also be able to feel a sense of *connection* or *identification* with others. These two—a person's sensitivity to his or her own pain and suffering, and that same person's sense of connection with others—constitute what can be called the root of *loving, empathic concern*. It is this empathetic concern that engenders the compassionate attitude that finds others' suffering to be as unbearable as one's own.ⁱⁱ

All major contemplative traditions envision the possibility that, through deliberate cultivation, one can learn to extend one's empathetic concern even to one's adversaries.ⁱⁱⁱ Genuine compassion is based on the simple recognition *that someone else's suffering is akin to one's own suffering, and that just as one wishes to be free of one's own pain and sorrow, so one can feel the same about another's unhappiness*. Compassion is devoid of any hint of being patronizing or condescending,

and thus needs to be distinguished from pity, which merely feels sorry for the other person. Compassion entails allowing one's heart to be open, being sensitive to the other's pain and sorrow, letting oneself be emotionally moved by his or her suffering, having the cognitive ability to empathize with someone else's situation, remaining nonjudgmental in one's response, and being tender toward the other person.

Most of the Tibetan Buddhist practices designed to cultivate compassion, which are the source of the reflective meditative exercises offered here, follow a clearly delineated developmental process, moving through distinctly identifiable mental states. For example, to help overcome our natural tendency to discriminate against those toward whom we feel indifferent or even hostile, a key stage in compassion meditation involves the cultivation of a deep recognition of the *basic sameness of self and others* with respect to the fundamental, natural aspiration to attain happiness and overcome suffering. This is the deep recognition that, just like me, others yearn to be happy and to avoid even the slightest pain. It is through such recognition that a common bond with others is established. Another crucial stage involves the cultivation of *empathic concern*—an attitude that, holding others dear, enables our hearts to be sensitive to others' pain and suffering. Such empathic concern arises on the basis of having cultivated a genuine sense of *appreciation of others* through recognizing the profound ways in which one's own welfare is intimately interconnected with the welfare of many others. Together, empathetic concern and appreciation of others form the basis for the arising of genuine compassion for others—and, ideally, for all beings.

III. Rationale behind the Sequence of Steps in the CCT Program

STEP 1, *Settling and Focusing the Mind*, aims to provide basic skills essential for any reflective, contemplative practice (such as meditation) that requires a degree of ability to still one's mind and focus it. Here, two breathing meditation exercises are presented. These breathing meditations are preceded by a preliminary breathing exercise called the "cleansing breath" exercise, which involves taking a series of deep diaphragmatic breaths to help release stress and tension. This preliminary exercise is followed by the first breathing meditation, which involves silent mental counting of breath cycles, and by a second meditation, which involve resting one's mind simply on the awareness of the movement of one's breath.

STEP 2, *Loving-Kindness and Compassion for a Loved One*, is designed primarily to help us recognize what the experiences of love and compassion feel like when they occur naturally in us. The practices offered in this session trade on mental processes that naturally occur in us and that are crucial for conscious, deliberate cultivation and nurturing of compassion in our hearts and minds. The meditation and the accompanying practical exercises are aimed at helping us recognize, both physically and psychologically, the feelings of warmth, tenderness, concern, and connectedness associated with the experience of compassion and loving-kindness, by deliberately evoking our feelings for a loved one. (For the meaning of the phrase "a loved one," see [page].) For many people, the greatest challenge in this meditation may be to cultivate the mental picture of one's loved one that is necessary for this kind of meditation. It might be helpful for trainees to devote some time, separately, on cultivating such an image. If necessary, trainees should be allowed to bring (or work with at home) a photograph of the loved one that they can use as a visualization aid.

In STEP 3, *Loving-Kindness and Compassion for Oneself*, one learns to apply these feelings that characterize a loving and compassionate relation—warmth, tenderness, acceptance, and a deep

sense of concern – to oneself. This step is critical because without the ability to genuinely connect with one’s own feelings and needs, and learn to relate to them with compassion, it is difficult to genuinely develop compassion for others, especially strangers and adversaries. Acknowledging that this step is often a great challenge to many people, the practices associated with it are spread over two weeks, with cultivating compassion for oneself as one subsection and cultivating loving-kindness for oneself as the other. Step 3a focuses on qualities such as greater self-acceptance, tenderness, non-judgment, and caring in self-to-self relations, while Step 3b focuses on qualities such as warmth, appreciation, joy, and gratitude.

STEP 4, *Establishing the Basis for Compassion toward Others*, involves two key elements essential for generating genuine compassion toward others: (1) embracing shared common humanity, and (2) developing appreciation of others. The first element consists of deep recognition of the basic sameness of self and others with respect to the fundamental aspiration to attain happiness and overcome suffering. This is the essential ingredient for empathy, the ability to *identify* with others – in other words, to put oneself in others’ shoes. This is done progressively, beginning with a loved one, then moving to a neutral person and from there to a difficult person, and culminating by extending this recognition of sameness to all beings. The second element is appreciation of the deep interconnectedness of self and others, especially acknowledging how one depends on countless others both for basic survival and for well-being. On this basis, a sense of *gratitude* toward others is developed.

STEP 5, *Cultivating Compassion toward Others*, builds on the two bases of Step 4 to cultivate compassion for *all* beings. Here, too, one learns by moving from focusing on a loved one to focusing on a neutral person, then on a difficult person, and finally on all beings. In essence, what this step does is expand the circle of one’s concern to embrace all humanity, simply through the deep recognition that, just like me, all others wish to achieve happiness and overcome suffering.

STEP 6, *Active Compassion Practice*, involves explicit evocation of the altruistic wish to *do something* about others’ suffering. In formal sitting practice, this essentially takes the form of a visualization practice that, as a first step, imagines “taking away” from others both their suffering and the destructive patterns of thought and behavior that underlie their suffering. The second step in this meditation involves imagining “giving” or offering to others everything that is beneficial in oneself, including one’s material prosperity, happiness, joy, and patterns of thought and behavior that bring about happiness and a deeper sense of well-being. In the Tibetan source, this particular form of compassion practice is known as *tonglen*, literally, “giving and receiving.” The meditation for the final week is an integrated practice that combines the essential elements of all six steps into a compassion meditation practice that can continue to be done daily by participants who choose to adopt it.

IV. Required qualifications of the instructor

This manual, though comprehensive, is not meant to be used as the *only* resource adequate for teaching the CCT program. Using the CCT manual as a guide, the instructors are expected to draw substantially, both from their knowledge and understanding of contemporary psychology, especially in the field of emotion, as well as their understanding of and personal experience of the formal meditation practices outlined in the manual. In addition, the instructor is expected to have deep familiarity with and experience facilitating practical exercises, such as those presented in the manual, as part of their method of instruction in the context of group settings, such as a

workshop. In view of this, the instructors who will teach this CCT program are expected to have the following background qualifications: (1) A basic knowledge and understanding of contemporary psychology, including some general understanding of the associated brain systems, that pertain to teaching the CCT program, (2) a robust understanding of the structure of the CCT program, based on a deep familiarity with the formal meditation practices, and (3) personal experience of having undertaken formal compassion or loving-kindness meditations for an extended period of time, and finally (4) familiarity with the approach of using practical exercises as part of instructional methods.

Instructors trained in CCT will draw on knowledge learned in their “Science of Compassion” course and the materials they received as part of that course. They should keep abreast of relevant research in the domain. Instructors should also draw on the principles learned in the “Philosophical Perspectives on Compassion” course to shape their teaching. The password-protected Teacher Training website will be an ongoing resource to instructors, where they can continue to access materials and information as well as keep in touch with one another and Senior Teachers. Last, instructors are expected to continue to deepen in their own meditation practice by maintaining a daily practice and attending relevant retreats (CCT and other) with regularity.

V. Further Reading for Instructors

- Batson, Daniel C. *The Altruism Question: Toward a Social-Psychological Answer*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991.
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- Salzberg, Sharon. *Loving-Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*. Boston: Shambhala, 1995.
- Wallace, Alan B. *The Four Immeasurables: Cultivating a Boundless Heart*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2004.

NOTES

ⁱ For a book-length presentation of the traditional Tibetan meditations on the cultivation of compassion, see Jeffrey Hopkins, *Cultivating Compassion: A Buddhist Perspective* (New York: Broadway, 2001).

ⁱⁱ For a detailed study of compassion and its associated mental qualities, such as empathy and altruism, from contemporary research in psychology, see C. D. Batson, *The Altruism Question: Toward a Social-Psychological Answer* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991).

ⁱⁱⁱ For a useful collection of succinct presentations of the topic of compassion and altruism in the world's contemplative traditions, see Neuser Chilton, ed., *Altruism in World Religions*. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

WEEK ONE: *Step 1 – SETTLING AND FOCUSING THE MIND*

I. Overview and Class Plan

THEME: Settling the mind and becoming more aware

1. General introductory elements

- **Introduce yourself** to the class and present an **overview** of the eight-week course, including a **brief explanation** of what compassion is. [10 min]
- To help generate and sustain motivation for the course, briefly **discuss research findings on the effects and benefits**—especially on health, interpersonal relations, and happiness—of other-regarding emotions and mental qualities such as kindness, compassion, and loving-kindness. [5 min]
- Discuss the **basic guidelines**, including the context and parameters, of the classes. [5 min]
 - i. The context is to *evoke, recognize, and cultivate specific qualities that are natural to the human mind and heart, and to strengthen them in terms of skill acquisition*. This is done through a combination of (1) greater understanding of one’s psychological processes, (2) reflective (meditative) exercises, (3) practical exercises aimed at evoking the desired qualities in the context of interaction with others, and, wherever possible and appropriate, (4) relating the practices to your day-to-day life.
 - ii. The classes are not meant to be a therapeutic environment; participants need to respect each other’s emotional space so that everyone feels secure, comfortable, and at ease. To that end, instructors should please refrain from offering advice and should also redirect participants from giving advice to one another.
 - iii. In the course of a class, however, if as a result of touching something within, such as deep emotional wounds, a fellow participant expresses powerful emotions, it’s important for others to provide a space that is empathetic, supportive, and safe.
 - iv. Introduce the concept of resistance so participants can anticipate some of the common issues that are likely to emerge in the context of the course.
 - v. **Confidentiality:** Whatever personal stories are shared in the class must be treated as confidential. If, for the purpose of illustrating a point, some do wish to share a story with others, all information pertaining to the identity of the people involved, such as names, must remain anonymous.

2. Lead through the guided “Well” Exercise for setting intention (for details, see [page]) [10 min]

3. Group introduction [20 min]

Ask participants to state their names and, if they wish, to say a few words (not more than two to three sentences) about why they are here or what they are hoping to get out of this course.

4. Pedagogy focused on meditation, especially settling the mind; include some interactive discussion (for details, see [page]) [20 min]

Pedagogical discourse must include the identification of the recurring theme of the class. For example, the theme of week one is **settling the mind and becoming more aware**. Instructors should constantly keep the key theme of the particular class in mind so that it remains an important focus of attention both in the pedagogy as well as in group discussions.

- Open with a brief introduction to meditation in general. Pay particular attention to the basic issues pertinent to first-time meditators (distraction, feeling like you are doing it wrong or it is not working, self-judgment, etc.) See “Basics of a Meditation Practice,” [page].
- Then introduce breathing meditation as a means of settling the mind.

The goal here is to introduce enough to enter people into basic breath meditation, which they will continue to explore in the upcoming week. Next week, after having had a week of practice, they should receive a more elaborate conceptual framework for the practice.

If deemed helpful, take a 3-5 minute break to do some simple stretching. This might be particularly beneficial to maintain alertness, especially when many participants are coming to class after a long day of work. Similar stretching breaks can be taken in subsequent weekly sessions as well.

5. In-class guided meditations on settling the mind through breathing (for the script, see [page]) [40 min]

Divide the “Cleansing breath”/“Following the breath” meditation into two segments, checking in after each one.

- Guide a brief “Cleansing breath”/“Following the breath” meditation, drawing from the Meditation Script on [page] [10 min]
- Lead check in [10 min]
- Guide another, slightly longer “Cleansing breath”/“Following the breath” meditation, drawing from the Meditation Script [15 min]
- Lead another brief check-in [5 min]

6. Explain the home practice [7 min]

- 15 minutes of daily settling the mind through breathing meditation for the week, based on a recorded meditation script. Give suggestions on creating a time and place for practice amidst busy lives.
- Give an overview of materials and how to access and use them.
- As “informal practice,” adopt some or all of the exercises described on [page].
- Check in to make sure participants know how to access and use recorded guided meditations and suggested readings that you may choose to provide.

- Offer an inspirational book selection; something on mindfulness in every day life or perhaps HH the Dalai Lama's *Beyond Religion*, (chapter 4) "Compassion, the Foundation of Well-Being."

7. Closing gesture [3 min]

The closing of the session could take the form of something like the following:

"Now, let's once again find a comfortable posture and take a moment to pause and reflect on what we have done here together today, and the possible benefits of this work for your own well-being and for your interactions with others." (*pause for a few moments of silence and then ring the bell*).

II. The “Well” Exercise for Setting Intention

Intention-setting—namely, the setting up of a conscious, deliberate thought of what you want to accomplish in an undertaking—is an important element of any transformational process aimed at cultivating certain habits of the mind and habits of the heart. In some contemplative traditions, setting the intention, especially at the beginning of a day, is likened to setting the “tone” for the day. Like selecting the basic tone of a musical piece, whatever intention is set at the beginning of a task colors that task, exerting a lasting influence on one’s moods and thoughts while performing it. This exercise of setting intention also allows one to become much more aware of one’s own deep yearnings and aspirations, thus opening greater possibility of aligning one’s thoughts, habits, and attitudes to be more in tune with one’s deeper aspirations and values. The following exercise is an example of intention-setting practice.¹

- Begin the exercise (with eyes closed) with three deep, diaphragmatic breaths, each time drawing the inhalation down into the belly and filling up the torso with the in-breath from the bottom to the top, like filling a vessel with water. Then take a long, slow exhalation, expelling all the air from the torso, all the way from the top to the bottom.
- Now, imagine an old-fashioned well going deep into the earth. It is filled with cool, fresh, clear water.
- See if you can place yourself in this scene by noticing the sky, clouds, temperature, and sounds. Take a moment to fill in the scene in your mind. Perhaps the well is on a grassy knoll, maybe there is a bright blue sky with puffy clouds. . . . Place yourself in the scene.
- Notice on the ground a smooth stone.
- Pick it up, and feel its weight, texture, and temperature in your hands.
- Imagine that embedded within the stone is the question, “*What brings me here now . . . why have I chosen to take this class at this time in my life?*”
- Now throw the stone into the well and listen for the answer that bubbles up as the stone hits the water.
- As the stone sinks into the well, see if more answers rise to the surface. The stone may careen off the walls as it sinks deeper and deeper. Listen for the sound when the stone hits the bottom of the well, and see if any other answers bubble up.

Sit quietly for a few minutes, and then segue into group introduction.

III. Pedagogy

Settling and Focusing the Mind

Basics of a meditation practice

Open with some general comments about meditation practice, and explain the rationale for including this first step, even though our actual goal is to cultivate compassion. There are numerous forms of meditation practice; broadly speaking, however, meditation can be described as a form of *disciplined inner reflective exercise*. In any form of reflective practice, a basic requirement is to be able to bring one's mind to a calmed, settled state so that one can begin to apply the mind in a more focused and sustained manner. The calmed, quiet, relaxed state of mind we are seeking to develop can be brought about through various techniques, such as the breathing exercises being offered in this first session. It is important to normalize for new meditators that engaging with these meditations may at first produce/draw attention to the opposite of a settled mind.

Our untrained ordinary minds lack focus and are often distracted by extraneous events or habitual thought patterns. With lack of focus comes a certain lack of clarity of mind, thus taking us through a path of patterns of thoughts, emotions, and moods that can lead to our own ruin. The cultivation and application of two key mental faculties are essential for engaging in any reflective mental practices—namely, (1) *mindfulness*, which helps keep our attention on the chosen object of our focus, and (2) *meta-cognition*, an awareness that helps monitor whether or not our attention is still present.

Science for first psychoeducational module on settling and focusing the mind

- In this first psychoeducational module, explain the relationship between emotion and cognition and the relevance of this relationship to emotional regulation.
- Discuss the basics of the threat-detecting systems.
- Touch on the stress response and inflammation: that one of the big problems of modern life is constant stress and chronic inflammation. Reference Firdhaus's Telluride presentation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qw30ZgVYqJ4>
- Tie in how meditation and these practices will help provide us with a way of regulating the stress response.
- You can explicitly tie this in with the Buddhist psychological principles enumerated in the "Habits of Mind, Habits of Heart" section of Week Two's pedagogy.
- In some contexts, it may be useful to mention the word mindfulness and two operational definitions of mindfulness as a two-component mindfulness model: 1) self-regulation of attention to immediate experience which enables increased recognition of present-moment mental events, and 2) the adoption of a particular orientation to one's experience, characterized by curiosity, openness and acceptance.
- According to Shapiro and Carlson's 3-component model of mindfulness, mindfulness consists of Attention, Attitude, and Intention. Through mindfulness training and the regulation of present moment sensation and emotion, the prefrontal cortex changes promote

the stable recruitment of a non-conceptual sensory pathway, an alternative to the cognitive reappraisal of negative emotions.

- Mindfulness offers the capacity for one to intercede elaborative processing of experience and consequent rumination associated with the "default network".
- Mindfulness “grows” neural structure in key areas of the brain that seem to lead to greater overall connectivity.
- When introducing breath focus meditation, it may be useful to refer to these **three** papers:
 - i. Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition (Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, et al. 2004). *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*.
 - ii. The mindful brain and emotion regulation in mood disorders (Farb, Anderson, & Segal 2012). *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*.
 - iii. Mechanisms of mindfulness (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, et al. 2006). *Journal of Clinical Psychology*.
- When introducing compassion meditation and its benefits it may be useful to mention these two papers:
 - i. Enhancing compassion: A randomized controlled trial of a compassion cultivation training program (Jazaieri, Jinpa, McGonigal, et al. 2012). *Journal of Happiness Studies*.
 - ii. Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas 2010). *Psychological Bulletin*.

Some other aspects of general meditation practice that should be covered in this pedagogy include:

- How settling the body settles the mind.
- Pointing out that this meditation is not simply a relaxation exercise. Contextualize meditation more broadly, pointing out that there are a diversity of meditation practices.
- Sharing definitions of meditation; meditation can be understood from the Pali term “bhavana” as “cultivation.” Or from the Tibetan term “gom,” meditation can be glossed as “familiarization” or “getting used to it.”
 - i. Clarify that participants need to learn basic skills of mindfulness, which involve not only settling and focusing the mind but also the training of attention and the skill to observe one’s internal cognitive/emotional processes—without being unconsciously driven by them. We are teaching the skill to dispassionately observe, a core element of mindfulness.
 - ii. These skills carry on to the rest of the training throughout the course. Every meditation starts with this ability and we draw on these capacities with the future steps of training.
- How a more tranquil and calmed state of mind enables one to be more aware of one’s thoughts, emotions, and attitudes, thus allowing one to have better understanding of their dynamics.

- How such awareness can lead to a recognition of how it is often our own thoughts, beliefs, habits, and moods that underlie much of our suffering—stress, anxiety, chronic frustration, and perpetual lack of satisfaction.
- How meditation can provide a much-needed space, respite, or “pause” from being swept away by the powerful tides of our hectic, modern, technological lifestyle.
- How such a pause provides a vital vantage point from which one can learn to take stock of the big picture that is life.
- How disciplined focus on our breath can help train our attention so that we are able to apply this natural capacity with greater choice and control.
- Bring up the “stirring dirt in glass” metaphor. A settled mind is clearer, which makes it easier to see what is there and provides opportunities for constructive, wholesome actions and thinking.

Two breathing meditation exercises

Next, describe the two forms of breathing meditation exercises that will be our practice for this first week. These practices involve taking your breath as the *object* of your meditation and maintaining a simple awareness of the flow of your in-breath and out-breath.

The meditation begins with adopting a comfortable physical posture and taking several (usually three, six, or nine) long, deep, diaphragmatic breaths, breathing in and breathing out, to induce relaxation. Then, with a more relaxed body and mind, you begin directing your focus to, and maintaining your focus on, your breath, sustaining awareness of both in- and out-breaths. At the initial stage, if maintaining a simple awareness of breath is proving to be difficult, you can also use props like mental counting—both inhalation and exhalation as one round or cycle—to assist you in retaining your focus on the breath. Inevitably, every now and then you will find that you have lost your focus, distracted by extraneous events or by habitual thought patterns such as anticipations, memories, and so on. When you notice that your attention has wandered, gently bring it back to your breath. It’s especially important not to let yourself give in to negative self-judgment or criticism when you catch yourself becoming distracted and drifting away. Each time this happens, notice the distraction, and without forcing yourself to suppress it, gently let it go and return to your breath. As you continue to train in this way, you will gradually develop mental stability that is accompanied by some ability to maintain your attention in the present moment.

In brief, the key points about the two breathing meditation practices to cover in the introductory explanation include:

- The importance of adopting a comfortable physical posture (position of the hands, eyes, tongue, lips, and so on).
- Some explanations about what to do when you become aware that your mind is distracted.
- The need to maintain a fine balance between over-application and overexertion on the one hand and falling into a state of laxity and dullness on the other.

- The importance of remaining nonjudgmental, accepting, and open when your meditation does not go well, or does not go as expected ... it is what it is, and being aware of this is part of the whole enterprise of meditation practice itself. Try adopting an attitude of loving-kindness or self-compassion toward one's own mind in the context of practice, when relating to the wandering mind in the context of meditation.
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IV. Meditation Script

Step 1: Settling and Focusing the Mind

Note to instructors: The scripts for all the guided meditations in this protocol are not necessarily meant to be followed verbatim. Rather, they are examples of what such guided meditations must look like in terms of length, detail, and close step-by-step structure.

Welcome to compassion cultivation practice. Compassion is the *wish that others not suffer*, accompanied, often, by the *urge to help relieve the suffering of others*. When compassion arises in our heart, our mind is free from hatred, negative judgment, anxiety, and obsessive self-focus. It opens our heart, expands our awareness, and engenders a feeling of tenderness that naturally connects us with others. So cultivating compassion is a source of peace in our heart and mind.

This is the first in a six-step meditation process aimed at cultivating and nurturing compassionate heart and mind within us. This first step involves settling our mind and learning to focus it.

The First Step: Settling and focusing the mind

1.1 The first meditation in this six-step process of compassion cultivation practice is settling our mind and learning to focus it. For this, settle yourself into a comfortable position—adopt a posture that allows you to relax while keeping you alert. You may sit on a cushion, on the floor, or in a chair. If you are sitting in a chair, your feet should be flat on the floor. If you are sitting on a cushion, it is often helpful to have your seat raised an inch or two higher than your knees. If possible, you want to maintain an upright posture, without slumping or leaning but also without stiffness or tension. Sit with your back comfortably straight, the shoulders open, level, and slightly pulled back, and your head bent slightly forward. Your eyes can be closed or slightly open; if you leave them open they should be cast down, without focusing on anything specific. Your jaw should be relaxed and your lips in a natural position, gently touching; your tongue should be gently pressed against the upper palate with your teeth unclenched. Finally, you can place your hands flat on your thighs or rest them in your lap.

It is important to be at ease, without any undue strain or tension in the body, so if the position just described proves painful for you in any way, simply sit in whatever posture you find most comfortable. Throughout each meditation session, let your body be as still as possible, without fidgeting or moving. Stillness of the body helps to bring about greater stillness of the mind. **[2:00]**

1.2 Next we will take a series of long, deep “cleansing breaths” to help induce relaxation. We will begin by taking a deep, slow, gentle breath in through both nostrils, as if we are giving ourselves a relaxing internal massage. As you inhale, draw your breath all the way down to the bottom of your abdomen and, when you have reached full capacity, release the breath slowly and fully, but without forcing it. As you breathe out, imagine that, along with all the tensions in your body, it also clears your mind of worries, anxiety, and any other tensions that afflict you. Just let it all go; just breathe them out.

Now, when you are ready, take seven long cleansing breaths in the manner just as described, allowing yourself to become aware of the sensations arising from this deep breathing. (*Breathe in ... and breathe out.... Repeat 6 more times.*) **[2:00]**

1.3 Next we will do a breathing meditation that involves silent mental counting. Having performed the cleansing breaths, now relax your control over the breath and allow it to settle into

a pace of its own that is neither too fast nor too slow. The slight effort required to maintain this measured pace will be sufficient to keep your attention focused continuously on the breath. Maintaining a natural rhythm, with your breathing neither too shallow nor too deep, helps bring your attention into the present moment by focusing on this rhythmic movement of the breath ... Do this for a while.

Having established a natural breathing rhythm, let us start this meditation. Notice when you breathe in (*breathe in ...*) and breathe out (*breathe out ...*). As you breathe out, mentally count (each cycle of inhalation followed by an exhalation) “one ...,” “two ...,” “three ...,” and so on, up to “five....” This counting will assist you in maintaining your focus. Count each cycle of breath in this way; when you complete one series of five, pause briefly, and then start counting again from one. Repeat this process several times, while keeping your awareness, as much as possible, simply on your breath. [3:00]

Once again, while maintaining your awareness on your breath, as you breathe out, mentally count “one ...,” “two ...,” “three ...,” and so on, and keep repeating the same process for a while. [3:00]

Continue breathing and mentally count “one ...,” “two ...,” “three ...,” and so on. [2:00]

Stop here and check in with the class on how things are going.

1.4 Now dispense with counting and simply observe the incoming and outgoing breath in an alert, focused, and continuous way. As your breath continues to flow in and out of its own accord at a natural, unforced pace, the passage of air will arouse subtle sensations at the spot just beneath the nostrils and above the upper lip. Using these subtle sensations here as a reference point, continue to maintain your awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. Remember to bring your attention back to this spot whenever it wanders away. Let us now do this breathing meditation for a while. [5:00]

You will undoubtedly notice the tendency of your mind to wander away from the focal object of meditation, which in this case is the incoming and outgoing breath and the subtle sensations aroused by the breath at the spot just below the nostrils. As soon as you notice that your attention has wandered away—hijacked by sounds, memories, thoughts of the future, or any other distraction—simply acknowledge them. Without judging them as good or bad, without trying either to follow these thoughts or to suppress them, and without any sense of blame or self-recrimination whatsoever, simply escort your attention gently back to the rhythmic movement of the breath. Gently but firmly place your focus there and continue with the meditation. [3:00]

Throughout this practice, remain relaxed. Although you are focusing your attention as continuously as possible on your breath, do so without any tightness in the body or mind. If any tightness or tension does build up, allow it to leave with the next out-breath. And then refocus your attention with the next in-breath. Keep a gentle expression on your face, and allow the area around your eyes to remain soft. Without forgetting to pay attention to the rhythmic movement of the breath, remain at ease, simply observe your breath, and continue with the practice. [3:00]

Whenever your attention wanders, escort it gently back to the breath, maintain your awareness simply on the breath, and continue with the meditation. [3:00]

1.5 Now, for the concluding minutes of this session, attend to each moment with openness and awareness. See if you can be like a child who, when seeing something new and interesting, views it without judgment, simply aware of the wonder of the moment. (*Pause*)

Reconnect with the breath and bring your attention back to the present moment ... Maintain awareness of your incoming and outgoing breath ... [2:00]

While observing the rhythm of your breath, maintain this awareness of the present moment with an open and clear mind. **[2:00]**

1.6 Let us conclude this session by simply resting our mind in the degree of calmness and serenity that may have arisen through this meditation session. **[1:30]**

[End of meditation 1]

V. Informal Daily Practices

“Informal practice” here refers to the reflective exercises that one could adopt in one’s day-to-day life, outside the context of a “formal” sitting meditation. They are, in a sense, something like “meditation on the go” practices, suggesting the possibility of using everyday life experience as a source of spiritual training. This tradition of using everyday life experience as a resource for one’s meditative practice is beautifully captured in the Tibetan Mind Training slogan *“Relate whatever you encounter to your meditation practice right now.”* The key idea behind this informal practice is to develop a set of exercises one could apply in an everyday context, so that what is learned and cultivated in formal sitting meditations can be brought into everyday interactions with others and the world around us. These informal exercises, in turn, inform and enrich the quality of one’s formal sitting meditation practice, thus complementing and reinforcing each other in a most constructive and efficient manner.

The specifics of what such informal practices might consist of will differ according to the meditation theme one is pursuing at any given time. In the case of pursuing the theme of Step 1 of the CCT program (namely, settling and focusing the mind), the following are some examples of informal practices that one could adopt:

- Make meaningful pauses throughout the day while checking in with your awareness of the breath.
- Whenever you sense that something is beginning to make you feel stressed, take few deep, diaphragmatic breaths and let the breaths out.
- Also, when you are about to begin some important task, such as making a difficult phone call, teaching a class, sitting down to draft a letter or a report, or having a serious talk with a family member, take a deep breath and relax.
- When you happen to walk through a garden and see a beautiful flower with vibrant colors, take your time to observe the details of that flower in front of you – its shape, color, fragrance, the space around the flower, and so on. Simply take in the richness of this experience of seeing the flower.
- Take a mundane daily task, such as washing the dishes, and do it mindfully. Notice the feeling of the water in your hands, the movements of the brush or sponge on the dish, the texture of the soap, and so on. You can apply deliberate awareness to anything you do (dishes, brushing your teeth, folding laundry, etc.).
- If you can, walk up to a high vantage point, preferably in nature, and enjoy the vista from the top, extending to the farthest horizon as a vast and open expanse in front of your eyes. Simply rest your mind in the vastness of this view.
- Alternatively, on a beautiful, sunny day, lie down on the ground and watch the deep blue sky. Take in the vastness of the space, immerse your mind in this total open expanse, and rest in it.

NOTES

ⁱ For a detailed explanation of this practice from its classical Tibetan sources, see Shönu Gyalchok and Könchok Gyaltzen, *Mind Training: The Great Collection* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005; translated and edited by Thupten Jinpa), especially pp. 94–96, 335–55. A contemporary exposition of the practice can be found in Pema Chodron, *Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living* (Boston: Shambhala, 2004).

WEEK TWO: *Step 2 – Loving-Kindness and Compassion for a Loved One*

I. Overview and Class Plan

THEME: Becoming aware of your natural capacity to care

1. Settling the mind and intention-setting exercises [10 min]

2. Check-in about the previous week's home practice [10 min]

Offer an opportunity to the participants to share, in a manner of quiet self-reflection, what stood out to them about the formal sitting and informal practices of the previous week. During the discussion period, introduce the notion of mindfulness and the critical importance of cultivating greater mindful awareness, especially with regard to one's own bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts.

3. Pedagogy, including interactive discussion (for details, see [page]) [20 min]

Important points to remember in this pedagogy for Step 2 are, among others, the following:

- The meaning of the phrase “a loved one” and the importance of choosing the “right” loved one for this meditation practice.
- The importance of learning to recognize what it feels like, especially in the body, when one experiences love and compassion naturally, such as for a loved one.
- Learning to recognize what it feels like to genuinely see, acknowledge, accept, and value someone.
- Reading a poem, such as Naomi Shihab's “Shoulders,” or a short story, which seeks to evoke the spirit of unconditional tenderness and caring for others.
- If feasible and deemed helpful, one could also use creative visual material – such as a film clip showing dog rescue, mother-infant bonding, or any other similar clip – to help evoke caring and nurturing sentiments such as tenderness, warmth, soothing, and open-heartedness .

4. Exercise in embodying compassion or loving-kindness (for the description, see [page]) [30 min]

The key here is getting the participants to feel what it is like in the body to connect to compassion or loving-kindness for someone they care about. In terms of actual sequence, begin with a mindfulness of sensation practice (e.g. of hearing a chime) and then follow it with an embodying loving-kindness or compassion exercise.

5. In-class guided meditation on loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one (for the script, see [page]) [30 min]

6. Discussion based on the immediate experience of the guided meditation. [10 min]

7. Home practice [5 min]

- 15-20 minutes of daily meditation on loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one.
- As an informal practice, do “kindness on the go” at least once a day. This could be in the form of silently sending an “anonymous” wish of kindness to a random stranger.
- Notice when loving-kindness shows up naturally, pausing and relishing it, and observing what it feels like in the body.

8. Closing gesture

II. Stabilizing and Intention-Setting Exercise

This preliminary exercise is composed of two distinct parts: (1) an exercise for settling or stabilizing the mind through breathing, and (2) a visualization exercise aimed at setting one's intention. The first part involves inducing relaxation through deep diaphragmatic breathing and then settling into a rhythm of breathing where, taking one's breath as the *object* of focus, one rests the mind on the simple experience, or sensation, of breathing in the present moment.

It might be helpful to begin by stating what you are going to do (we will settle the mind and then engage in a visualization). People work with visualization differently: Some get clear mental images, others more a felt sense, etc. The best strategy is to relax and allow the experience to unfold, without too much striving. In this practice you will be asked to imagine a loved one. Don't struggle or edit, just allow whatever comes to mind.

- We begin the exercise with taking three long, deep, diaphragmatic “cleansing breaths” to help induce relaxation. This is done through taking in deep, slow, gentle breaths through both nostrils, as though you are giving yourself a relaxing internal massage. As you inhale, draw your breath all the way down to the bottom of your abdomen and, when you have reached full capacity, release the breath fully, but without forcing it. As you breathe out, imagine that along with all the tensions in your body it also clears your mind of worries, anxiety, and any other tensions that afflict you. Just let it all go; just breathe them out.
- Now, readjust your body posture so that it is in a relaxed and tension-free state. Keep your spine straight but not tensed, and stretch your shoulder muscles a little. Let's now do this cleansing breath exercise three times in the way just described, allowing yourself to become aware of the sensations arising from this deep breathing. (*Breathe in ... and breathe out ...*) [2:00]
- Next, let your breathing settle into a relaxed rhythm, either using the counting exercise or simply following the breath, or using a combination of both. [3:00]
- Now, visualize yourself lying on grass and reflect on the following three questions as they relate to a loved one—someone who is important in your life, someone who is easy to love (or your pet), someone you care about and feel comfortable around.ⁱ
 - i. *If anything were possible, what would I really wish my loved one to find in his or her life?*
 - ii. *If anything were possible, how would I really wish my loved one to develop as a human being? (or as a pet, if that is my chosen loved one)*
 - iii. *What would I really wish my loved one to offer the world?*

III. Pedagogy

Loving-Kindness and Compassion for a Loved One

Begin with a brief background introduction to this second step in the CCT program. Revisit the definition of compassion and elaborate on the characteristics of compassion and associated mental qualities, such as loving-kindness. Whereas *compassion* is a natural quality of our hearts that connects us with others' sufferings and needs, enabling us to respond to them out of true concern, *loving-kindness*ⁱⁱ is the genuine wish to see others become safe, happy, and joyful, stemming from a heart that is open, tender, and optimistic. Loving-kindness involves an unconditional acceptance of others as they are in their own right, without any imposition of our own self-centered vision of who they should be.

A key purpose of introducing this stage of practice is to allow participants to become more aware of and recognize what it feels like when positive affective states like compassion, love, gratitude, and tenderness toward someone arise in us. An essential foundation for this is to cultivate some ability to be more aware of one's own physical, mental and emotional states. To this end, as a preliminary to step 2a of CCT program, the participants should be introduced to some basic understanding of the practice of mindful awareness and led through some in-class exercises (e.g. as presented on [page]).

"Habits of the mind, habits of the heart"

This second week is a good time to delve into some of the dynamics of our thoughts, attitudes, and habits on the one hand, and how we experience the world and act in it on the other. Psychology, both classical Buddhist as well as contemporary, demonstrates the intimate connection that exists between the way we *perceive* the world and the way we *experience* it. In other words, there is an intimate connection between (1) our perceptions and thoughts, and (2) our feelings and emotions. For example, if you perceive the world to be a hostile place, where everyone is trying to take advantage of you, you will relate to the world with suspicion, fear, and apprehension. In contrast, if you perceive the world to be essentially a welcoming place and recognize others as essentially kind and good, you will interact with the world primarily out of an affective stance that is in accord with this vision.

What this suggests is a highly dynamic system in which our experiences inform and shape our perceptions (our view, or basic outlook), yet our perceptions also color and affect our experience itself. For example, children who grow up in a family environment where anger is a dominant emotion tend to be hypersensitive to facial expressions associated with anger—so much so that they tend to overinterpret others' emotions through this dominant filter. Furthermore, recent neuro-imaging studies have demonstrated that our emotional reactions—measured by both self-report and neural responses in emotion-related limbic brain regions (e.g., amygdala and anterior insula cortex) when anxiously anticipating a stressful event—can be modified by volitionally reframing the meaning of the event (i.e., cognitively reinterpreting the event), or even by feeling the support of one's partner when she/he holds our hands (i.e., social connectedness). These studies show that how we choose to think about a situation, or how we cultivate social support, interacts with the inherent plasticity of neural networks that mediate emotional reactivity.

In one important sense, *the contemplative path of meditation can be understood as a method of internalizing and integrating constructive views – about one's own self, fellow humans, and the world we live in – into the very fabric of our being, so that these inform and form the contents of the habits of our mind as well as the habits of our heart.* This understanding aligns extremely well with the

classical meaning of terms such as *bhavana* (Sanskrit) and *gom* (Tibetan) that are rendered into English as “meditation.” Both these two original terms connote “cultivation” or “familiarization,” suggesting a process whereby a certain way of thinking, or way of being, is cultivated and internalized.

The rationale for this step of the CCT program

Then explain the rationale for this particular step—namely, cultivating loving-kindness and compassion for an easy target, a loved one at this stage in the CCT course.

First, what do we mean by the phrase “a loved one” in the context of this training? Generally, the phrase refers to a person who is important in your life, such as a child, spouse, parent, or friend whom you deeply care for. However, for the purpose of our training in loving-kindness here, initially it’s critical to choose a loved one with whom you feel an uncomplicated, loving, and secure connection (as opposed to a relationship that entails everyday interactions such as household chore negotiations, complaints, and recriminations, such as with your spouse or teenaged children). The person should be someone for whom you feel unconditional love, acceptance, and respect. This could be your infant child, a grandparent, a mentor, or even your pet.

Tenderness toward someone we care deeply for, loving affection for a child, heartfelt concern for the pain of a person we love, the simple wish for a loved one to be happy – these are feelings that naturally arise in us. The strategy here is to evoke these natural qualities of our heart so that we learn to recognize their experience, both in terms of psychology and in terms of their physiological correlates, such as heartbeat, sensations in the belly, and a feeling of warmth, expansiveness, and freedom from narrow self-concern. The pedagogy, including interactive discussions, should touch on, among others, the following points:

- How feelings of compassion, a sense of concern, and love arise naturally in us in relation to our loved ones
- By reflecting on these feelings, how we can come to recognize what it feels like, physically, emotionally, and mentally, when feelings of warmth, tenderness, and caring arise toward someone
- How, when you relate to a loved one in the spirit of loving-kindness and compassion, you do so without negative judgment, with openness of heart, and in the spirit of acceptance and concern
- How genuine compassion involves unconditional acceptance of the other as a person, and how it is not contingent on what he or she may have done for you
- How, when compassion arises, it has the tendency to make you more aware of, and attentive to, the other person (or pet)
- Also, it’s critical to remind participants that it’s okay if specific emotions and feelings do *not* arise in the course of doing the reflective meditation exercises. The important point is to develop the intention to cultivate loving-kindness, rather than to consciously “experience” the feelings associated with it. The idea is to direct your mind along a specific train of thought, especially by setting the intention, which in itself allows your mind and heart to become more aligned with the qualities of compassion and loving-kindness.

- Thus it's important to understand that the loving-kindness and compassion meditation primarily entails setting your intention and making heartfelt aspirations.

Science for second psychoeducational module on loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one

- Two papers that could be useful at this point in the course are:
 - i. Functional neural plasticity and associated changes in positive affect after compassion training. (Klimecki, Leiberg, Lamm, & Singer 2012). *Cerebral Cortex*.
 - ii. A heuristic model of enactive compassion. (Halifax 2012). *Current Opinion in Supportive and Palliative Care*.
- The brain has the capacity to manifest functional and structural change through experience (neuroplasticity). This allows the brain to create new emotional patterns (affective plasticity). The study in Klimecki et al. suggests that a brief compassion training can increase positive affect and empathy and activate brain regions related to affiliation, and positive affect (orbitofrontal cortex, putamen, pallidum, and ventral tegmental region), but not necessarily diminish negative emotion in the face of others' suffering. Klimecki and his group of scientists wanted to know whether a short compassion training can change the way we respond to distressing situations. To test this, they took three groups, and gave one group a six-hour compassion training, followed by two hours of supervised meditation. The second group was a control, and the third group received memory training. The compassion group watched distressing videos both before and after the training. Before the training, these emotional videos elicited negative feelings. But after the training, in addition to generating the negative feelings, they also generated positive feelings and feelings of empathy. This result can be linked to the compassion training, because such a change did not occur in the memory group or the control. Researchers also examined the brains of these short-term compassion meditators and saw that the same kinds of changes had started happening in their brains as in the brain of an experienced compassion meditator. It looks as if training compassion for even a few hours can change how we react to stress.
- According to the model of Joan Halifax, compassion can be better understood as an emergent embodied and relational process that cannot be trained in itself. Compassion can be primed in an individual through the cultivation of six interrelated components: attentional and affective domains; intentional and insight domains, and embodied and engaged domains. This gives rise to 1) attentional and affective balance, 2) discernment, and 3) enactive, ethical and engaged responses to suffering and one's own joy, flourishing, equanimity and ethical foundation.
- In the article above, Halifax also touches on how tuning into our own bodies and sensation involves the same brain circuits as empathy. This may suggest that our own visceral experience is the key to understanding the experience of another. Thus, just being aware of one's own body and what is happening in it is a possible pathway to compassion. At the end of this discussion Halifax traces how mindfulness in physicians helps them become more aware of what they are feeling and doing (which in the case of a doctor is on its own an act of compassion, because it allows the doctor to do better work), and also helps them maintain a kind attitude toward others (compassion).
- Also touch on science of productivity and the detrimental role of stress (circling back to the stress theme addressed last week).

The key aspects of the loving-kindness meditation

As part of the pedagogy, it would be helpful to briefly outline the steps in the reflective meditation exercise as presented in the script:

- First, developing a mental image of your loved one as a focus of your intention;
- Acknowledge any feelings, such as tenderness, warmth, gratitude, and so on, that may arise in you toward this object;
- Then wish happiness, joy, and peace to this person through silent offering of phrases, and rejoice in the thought of his or her happiness;
- Invoke an experience of compassion, by visualizing your loved one's difficulties (e.g. health problems, feelings of inadequacy/insecurity, relationship challenges, financial difficulty);
- Acknowledge any feelings that may arise in you, and allow your heart to be touched by the loved one's suffering;
- Wish your object of concern to be free of suffering, through offering of silent phrases; and
- Finally, rejoice in the glory of warm-heartedness.

Explain how Steps 3 through 6 build upon the basis of the preceding steps, like climbing a spiral staircase. This means that in every subsequent step there will be a brief review of the preceding step, so that the new step emerges on the basis of the stable foundation of the preceding stages of the CCT program.

IV. Exercises in Embodying Compassion and Other Feeling-States

The exercise can be done with just one pair of feeling-states or all four, as time and interest allow. Below is a script for the first pair; you can adapt the script for other emotions.ⁱⁱⁱ

To Begin: Bring participants to a comfortable seated position, moving any belongings out of the way. It is good for participants to have a little room for this activity. Ideally they will be able to move a bit in their chairs and even stand up, when needed.

Part 1: Mindfulness of sensation exercise

"Let us take a few minutes to expand our awareness of sensory experience. Just as we can become mindful of the breath, we can apply acute awareness to each of our sensory modalities as well as to the contents of our thoughts. For this practice, we will be tuning into sound. Let us begin where we always do, with settling our bodies into a comfortable posture." **[Guide through the relaxation of posture and 3 cleansing breaths.]** Then release any effortful control over your breath, and gradually bring your attention to the normal rhythm of breathing."
[3 min]

"Now, notice the sounds in your immediate environment. Allow your ears to receive the sounds, to feel their texture. Do not attempt to identify them, just open to sound."
[3 min]

Discuss the exercise.

Part 2: Remembering and recreating a positive feeling-state

"In the following exercise, we will be remembering how different emotions feel, and trying to recreate the feelings in our minds and bodies. Remember that you have total control over this exercise. You can choose how much you recreate the feeling, and you can choose to stop a feeling at any point, return to relaxed breathing, and wait for the next part of the exercise."

"Now, remember a time when you felt really connected to someone else – it could be a person, or an animal. Or bring to mind a person or animal that naturally inspires in you a feeling of affection, love, or gratitude. **[brief pause]** Bring to mind a specific person or animal, and allow yourself to imagine them in as much detail as possible. If it is a specific memory, relive it in your mind. What was happening? How did it feel?" **[30 sec pause]**

"As you remember this event, or think about this loved one, allow yourself to feel this love and affection. Remember how it feels in your body." **[30 sec pause]**

"Now, we're going to try to exaggerate or express that feeling with the whole body. Keeping your eyes closed, let yourself come into a position that really expresses how love and affection feel. You can stay seated or stand up. You can use your face, your hands, and your entire body."
[Pause, and if participants seem reticent, repeat the instructions, adding, "There is no right or wrong way to do this exercise."]

“Notice how your body feels in this position. Hold it a little longer.” [15–30 sec pause]

“Now relax, and come back into your most comfortable seated position. Let go of the story or loved one you were thinking about, and return your attention to your breath.” [1 min pause]

Part 2b (Optional): Remembering and recreating a negative feeling state [might be better to do this for suffering or pain? To link it to compassion for other practice better?]

“Remember a time when you felt angry about a situation, or at someone else. It could be recent, or a time in the past when you felt really angry. [brief pause] Bring to mind a specific time you were angry, frustrated, or irritated. Allow yourself to remember it in as much detail as possible. Why were you angry? What happened?” [30 sec pause]

“Allow yourself to feel the anger, and remember what it felt like. As you remember this event, try to remember how the anger felt in your body. Pay more attention, at this point, with how the anger felt in your body rather than focusing on the story of the emotion.” [30 sec pause]

“Now, we’re going to try to exaggerate or express that feeling with the whole body. Keeping your eyes closed, let yourself come into a position that really expresses how anger feels. You can stay seated or stand up. You can use your face, your hands, and your entire body.” [Pause, and if participants seem reticent, repeat the instructions, adding, “There is no right or wrong way to do this exercise.”]

“Notice how your body feels in this position. Hold it a little longer.” [15–30 sec pause]

“Now relax, and come back into your most comfortable seated position. Let go of the story you were thinking about, and return your attention to your breath.” [1 min pause]

Possible questions to ask participants after each round (to be modified accordingly as per changes in the exercises):

- What really caught your attention (or what stood out to you) about that experience?
- Describe how _____ feels in your body. Where did you feel it? What did it feel like? (You can prompt more responses by being more specific: Did you feel tension or relaxation anywhere in your body? How did your breathing feel/change? Could you feel your heart rate, or sense pressure in the body? Could you feel any change in your jaw or face? In your stomach or gut? etc.) Was there anything you liked about how it felt? Was there anything you *disliked* about how it felt?
- What did you do to try to increase the feelings or bring them to life? What did you do with your thoughts/mind? What did you say to yourself? What details did you focus on? (Here you are helping participants recognize their own role in sustaining feelings of goodwill or harm.)
- Comparing two emotions (e.g., loving-kindness vs. anger), which one felt better to you? (Be prepared for some participants to prefer the “negative” emotion—anger can be quite appealing.) Ask participants why they prefer that emotion. (Be open to responses that include enjoying feeling revved up, self-righteous, etc.)

- Comparing two emotions (e.g., loving-kindness vs. anger), which one felt healthier to the body? What do you think the consequences might be of feeling this way on a regular basis?

Key points to draw out, or to use to summarize the activity:

- These feeling-states create real changes in the body that can affect both your immediate sense of well-being and your long-term health. The negative states can increase risk of disease and illness by harming the cardiovascular system, immune system, etc.
 - You can generate these feeling states at will – they don’t happen *to* you, you do them to yourself (through your thoughts). If participants report preferring a feeling-state like anger, you can highlight here the short-term payoff of these feeling-states as one reason we get hooked by them and choose to recreate them with our thoughts.
 - YOU are the “recipient” of your emotions, not the person you are feeling them about. You (and your body) had the experience of anger – the person you are angry at did not. You had the feeling of love. It is an inner experience, and you can choose to have or let go of feeling-states because of the effect they have on you, and on your health.
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V. Meditation Script

Step 2: Loving-Kindness and Compassion for a Loved One

Welcome to compassion cultivation practice. This is Step 2 in a six-step meditation process aimed at cultivating and nurturing compassionate heart and mind within us. This second step involves cultivating loving-kindness and compassion for someone whom you love and care deeply for, based on learning how to recognize and become aware of what it like, especially in the body, to feeling a connection with someone that you care for.

Settling the mind

First, choose a comfortable sitting posture and stretch your shoulders to release any residual tension. Then, when you are ready, take a series of five deep cleansing breaths, as we practiced before. As you do so, release all the worries and tensions of the day. **[1:30]**

Now, relax your control over your breath, allowing it to settle into its own natural pace, neither too fast nor too slow. Then, in silence, mentally count each cycle of breath, starting with “one ...,” “two ...,” up to “five ...,” and repeat this process of counting for a while. **[2:00]**

Then bring your attention into the present moment by focusing on the natural, rhythmic movement of your breath. Placing your focus on the subtle sensations just beneath your nostrils aroused by your breathing, let your mind rest on this movement of breath, simply observing the rhythm of in-breath and out-breath. Release yourself from any thoughts projecting into the past or any anticipation related the future. And settle into the only reality there is now: the present. Other than simply observing the present moment of your breath, give your mind a rest—this mind with all its concerns, plans, memories, hopes, and fears. Let it rest simply in the awareness of the gentle rhythm of your breathing. **[2:00]**

Whenever you find that your mind has wandered off during meditation, gently bring your attention back to your breath, using this spot beneath your nostrils as a reference point. Once again, gently bring your attention to your breath, and simply observe the subtle sensations you experience as a result of your breathing. Remain with this simple awareness for a while... **[2:00]**

The Second Step: Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one

Loving-kindness for a loved one

2.1 With a relaxed but focused mind, picture someone for whom you feel a great amount of love. (If it is helpful, you can use a photograph of that person as an aid.) He or she could be your child, a grandparent, a mentor, or a close friend; or this object of your deep affection could be your pet. Picture as vividly as possible this person whom you hold dear and care for deeply. Notice how, when you think of the person, you feel love in your heart.... *(Pause)* Notice how this feeling of love and connection makes you feel alive.... *(Pause)* Notice the feeling of tenderness and warmth this brings to your heart and how this makes you feel.... *(Pause)* **[1:00]**

[As a general note, it can be helpful to avoid the imperative tense as much as possible while guiding these meditations and use gerunds instead, as well as language that both invites and allows for a variety of experiences to arise. For example: “Noticing if feelings of tenderness and warmth arise in your heart and how this feels.” Also, the occasional instruction about what to do if the mind wanders, or if feelings of anger or grief arise, can be helpful.]

2.2 Next, while continuing with your breathing, focus on these feelings of tenderness, warmth, connectedness, belonging, and love that arise as you think of your loved one. With these sentiments of love, silently recite these phrases:

“May you be happy ...
May you be free from suffering ...
May you find peace and joy.”

“May you be happy ...
May you be free from suffering ...
May you find peace and joy.” [2:00]

Refresh the mental picture of your loved one and engender feelings of warmth, tenderness, and love. Once again silently repeat these phrases:

“May you be happy. *(Pause)*
May you be free from suffering. *(Pause)*
May you find peace and joy.” *(Pause)* [2:00]

2.3 Notice the sensations you feel around your heart as you picture your loved one. *(Pause)* Notice warmth, tenderness, and the closeness you may feel in your heart. *(Pause)* Then, as you breathe out, imagine that you extend a warm golden light from the center of your heart that carries all your feeling of love and connection. Imagine that this light touches your loved one, bringing him or her peace and happiness. Then, once again, silently repeat these phrases:

“May you be happy ...
May you be free from suffering ...
May you find peace and joy.” [2:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that your loved one achieves happiness ... and rejoice in the thought of his or her happiness. [1:00]

Compassion for a loved one

2.4 Now think of a time when this person was going through a difficult time. Maybe he or she suffered an illness, became painfully injured, encountered great difficulty in a relationship, or lost a job and as a result suffered great financial hardship ... *(Pause)* Notice how you feel when you think of him or her suffering ... *(Pause)* How does your heart feel? *(Pause)* Notice how you feel for his or her pain ... *(Pause)* Do you feel an aching sensation in your heart? *(Pause)* Do you feel an urge to reach out and help? *(Pause)* [2:00]

2.5 Next, while continuing with your breathing, focus on these feelings of tenderness, concern, and the urge to do something that arise in you as you imagine your loved one suffering. With these sentiments of compassion, silently recite these phrases:

“May you be free from suffering ...
May you be free from fear and anxiety ...
May you find safety and peace.” [2:00]

Refresh the mental picture of your loved one when he or she was suffering, and then engender feelings of concern, tenderness, and the urge to do something. Once again silently repeat these phrases:

"May you be free from suffering ...
May you be free from fear and anxiety ...
May you find safety and peace." [2:00]

2.6 Once again, notice the sensations you feel around your heart as you imagine your loved one when he or she was suffering. *(Pause)* Feelings of tenderness, concern, and the wish to do something arise in your heart. Then, as you breathe out, imagine that you extend a warm golden light from the center of your heart that touches your loved one. As it does so, imagine that this eases his or her suffering, bringing peace and tranquility. *(Pause)* Then, with a strong heartfelt wish that your loved one be free of his or her suffering, silently repeat these phrases:

"May you be free from suffering ...
May you be free from fear and anxiety ...
May you find safety and peace." [2:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that your loved one be free from suffering, fear, and anxiety... and rejoice in the thought that he or she is free from fear, anxiety, and suffering. [1:00]

2.7 Now, for the concluding minutes of this session, refresh your feelings of warmth, tenderness, and affection for your loved one. Allow your heart to be enlivened with these feelings and silently say these phrases:

"May you be happy ...
May you be free from suffering ...
May you find peace and joy." [2:00]

Then, refreshing the thought of when your loved one was suffering, engender feelings of tenderness, concern, and the urge to do something. Allow your heart to be touched by these sentiments and then silently repeat:

"May you be free from suffering ...
May you be free from fear and anxiety ...
May you find safety and peace." [2:00]

Feel with all your heart that your loved one achieves peace and freedom from suffering ... and rejoice in the thought of your loved one being free of pain, sorrow, and fear. [1:00]

Rejoicing in the glory of warm-heartedness

2.8 Embrace the tenderness and open-heartedness which this exercise of cultivating loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one may have given rise to. Allow your heart to simply rest in this state, and your mind to rest on the natural rhythm of your breath. **[1:00]**

[End of meditation 2]

NOTES

ⁱ These three questions were adapted from three similar questions proposed by Alan B. Wallace in his *The Four Immeasurables: Cultivating a Boundless Heart* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2004).

ⁱⁱ For a book-length contemporary presentation of loving-kindness meditation, based on the Theravada Buddhist tradition, see Sharon Salzberg, *Loving-Kindness: A Revolutionary Art of Happiness* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995).

ⁱⁱⁱ This exercise in embodying compassion and other feeling-states was contributed to the CCT program by Kelly McGonigal.

WEEK THREE: *Step 3a – Compassion for Oneself*

I. Overview and Class Plan

THEME: Self-acceptance and being kinder to yourself

1. Settling the mind and intention-setting exercises [10 min]

- Begin with three deep, diaphragmatic cleansing breaths; then settle into a rhythmic breathing, either using the counting exercise or simply following the breath, or using a combination of both.
- Then visualize lying on grass and reflect on the following three questions in relation to yourself:
 - i. *If anything were possible, what would I really love to find in my life?*
 - ii. *If anything were possible, how would I really love to develop as a human being?*
 - iii. *What would I really love to offer the world?*

2. Check-in about the previous week's home practice [10 min]

Remind the participants how important it is to bring the practices into their everyday life.

3. Pedagogy, including discussion (for details, see [page]) [10 min]

4. Self-acceptance and self-forgiveness exercise (for the description, see [page]) [20 min]

5. In-class guided meditation on compassion for oneself (for the script, see [page]) [30 min]

6. Home practice [5 min]

- 15-20 minutes of daily meditation on compassion for oneself
- Informal practices:
 - i. Try to notice and be more aware when you find yourself engaging in negative, self-critical thoughts and self-judgments.
 - ii. Recognize that these are just thoughts, constructs, and interpretations; they are representations and not actual facts.
 - iii. Explore ways you can consciously replace negative judgments with more compassionate narratives.

7. Closing gesture [1 min]

II. Pedagogy

Compassion for Oneself

Briefly review Step 2 and then present a background introduction to this Step 3 of CCT program. This third step is distributed over two weeks: (1) Step 3a focuses on the challenge of cultivating compassion for oneself, while (2) Step 3b relates to the cultivation of loving-kindness toward oneself.

Explain the significance of this particular step, emphasizing the importance of being able to feel compassion for one's own self. Studies are increasingly demonstrating how excessive self-criticism and negative judgment lead to destructive patterns like self-loathing and self-directed hostility; they also have the tendency to obstruct one's natural capacity to generate feelings of self-assurance, warmth, and self-soothing—qualities critical to one's sense of safety and general well-being. Crucially, this capacity to activate warmth and a soothing system plays an important role in emotion regulation, as well as in the capacity to be compassionate toward others without negative judgment.

"I am not my thoughts"

While neuroscience is increasingly pointing out the amazing plasticity of our brain—the ways new synaptic connections are constantly being made and new neurons literally being born as a result of our experience—most of us continue to habitually believe in a static self-representation. Based on our cultural, social, or childhood experience, each of us has internalized a particular representation of ourselves, a self-concept that exerts a powerful influence on our everyday life, and especially on how we *perceive* as well as *experience* ourselves and the world around us. There is nothing unusual or wrong about having a self-concept, but the problem is that most of us fail to appreciate that it is just that—a *concept*, a construct of our mind developed through our experience. We believe in the story that we ourselves have constructed, and confuse the content of our thoughts with reality. So when you catch yourself indulging in habitual negative self-judgments—"I am no good," "Nobody loves me," "I do not deserve to be happy," and so on—right there, you need to bring in the questioning voice that says, *"Wait a minute! These are just my thoughts, not me."*

Two methods can be applied to powerfully bring home this critical point about the distinction between our own representations (which often involve cognitive distortions) and reality. The first is essentially a process of learning to de-identify with our thoughts and habits, recognize them for what they are (namely, thoughts and constructs), and then simply *let go* of them. Here the reflective meditative practice of mindfulness—especially in the form of maintaining simple awareness of the present moment and observing the arising and dissolution of thoughts and emotions—is an effective technique. The second method is the process of careful differentiation between simple *observations* of facts and events on the one hand, and our evaluations and *judgments* on the other. For this, one of the most effective methods is application of the techniques developed in NVC (Nonviolent Communication).ⁱ

Negative self-judgment versus self-acceptance

Some of the other key points to cover in the pedagogy and discussion, especially on the issue of excessive negative self-judgment, might include:

- The correlation between excessive self-critical and negative judgments on the one hand, and stress, unhappiness and depressive tendencies on the other
- How lack of connection with one's own feelings and needs tends to lead to denial, self-pity, helplessness, and other unhealthy patterns of reacting to life's situations
- How, just as we have the capacity to respond to a loved one's difficulty with understanding, tenderness, and nonjudgmental concern, so we can relate to our own selves in a similar way
- How habitual self-judgments can be reframed in more compassionate ways of engaging in self-to-self relations. For example, if you find yourself engaging in self-recrimination for something that you did but regret, instead of instinctively reacting negatively to yourself with phrases like "I suck!" "Stupid me!" and so on, try to become aware of the feeling that was behind what you did, and see if you can connect this feeling to a deeper underlying need that you were trying to meet.
- How, as part of the process of letting go, it can be helpful to orient more toward a language of "helpful versus unhelpful" (namely, a constructive versus unconstructive way of relating to events), rather than using language that is fixated on truth/accuracy versus falsehood/inaccuracy.
- The possibility of truly accepting yourself as you are, with the ability to tell yourself, from the depths of your heart, "I am okay"
- How, paradoxically, when one is more in touch with one's own sufferings and needs, one becomes more capable of empathizing with other's needs and difficulties, thus opening one's heart to other's needs and suffering

Science for third psychoeducational module on compassion for oneself

- It may be useful to consult these two articles when teaching this part of the class:
 - i. The science of self-compassion (Neff in press). Chapter in C. Germer & R. Siegel (Eds.), *Compassion and Wisdom in Psychotherapy*. New York: Guilford Press.
 - ii. Self-compassion and reactions to unpleasant self-relevant events: The implications of treating oneself kindly (Leary, Tate, Adams, et al. 2007). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
- What effect does self-compassion have on how we get through difficult or stressful situations? Does it provide relief in ways that self-esteem does not? American psychologists Leary, Tate, Adams, Allen and Hancock tested out the effects of self-compassion in five different ways using a sample of college students, whose levels of self-compassion were determined before the study. The undergrads 1) reported their reactions to actual everyday difficulties in their lives, 2) imagined their reactions to three embarrassing hypothetical situations 3) introduced themselves on video and then were observed receiving another person's written negative feedback of that introduction, 4) were videotaped making up a fairy tale, then watched the video in lab, rated their own performance and reported on feelings that arose, and 5) thought about a past difficult event in a way that was either self-compassionate or reflected high self-esteem. (Since there are five parts to the study, this is a simplified description of longer and more complicated methods.) Researchers found that self-compassion does provide relief in distressing situations and unpleasant life events (and even distressing mental events). Those with self-compassion toward themselves were less

likely to ruminate about difficult situations after they happened and less likely to see themselves in a negative light just because others did. Yet they were also more likely to accept personal responsibility for their role in an unpleasant circumstance. In contrast, people with high self-esteem tended to avoid acknowledging their role in a negative situation, perhaps as a tool to keep their self-esteem high. Based on the study, Leary et al. concluded that when things go wrong and become difficult, self-compassion is a more valuable resource than self-esteem.

- According to Kristin Neff, self-compassion is composed of three aspects: 1) self-kindness; 2) a sense of common humanity and, 3) mindfulness. Neff also makes the distinction that self-compassion is not self-indulgence, self-pity, or narcissism. It also differs from self-esteem: Self-esteem is about comparing oneself to others (evaluation); self-compassion is a (caring) way of relating to ourselves. High levels of self-compassion are associated with lower levels of negative emotions in three differing scenarios: real, remembered, and imaginary negative events. Self-compassionate people may be more accurate in self-evaluations and therefore, less likely to engage in self-criticism or in self-defensive behaviors and thoughts in difficult situations than people with high self-esteem. Self-compassionate people may possess a more optimized form of self-esteem that does not heighten grandiosity, narcissism, or positioning relative to social hierarchy (i.e., looking down on others). A self-compassionate attitude can be trained, and it can be especially beneficial for people with low self-esteem.

Kristin Neff's scale to assess self-compassion can be found at: <http://www.self-compassion.org/test-your-self-compassion-level.html>

A compassionate image

Introduce the idea of cultivating a “compassionate image,” which is an important element of the reflective meditation practice that follows later on in the class. Adapted from CMT (Compassion Mind Trainingⁱⁱ, where the exercise was in turn derived from a traditional Tibetan visualization practice), this exercise involves cultivating an internal image with attributes such as wisdom, strength, warmth, and nonjudgmental acceptance. (For those with religious faith, the most powerful image is undoubtedly that of the Divinity, who represents the embodiment of infinite love and compassion.)

The key purpose here is to create one's own image of ideal caring and compassion, which, whenever necessary, one can invoke as a source of warmth, caring, and soothing. Such an image could be an anthropocentric form, or it could be a form such as the deep blue ocean, a firmly rooted tree with thick foliage, a deep green forest, or the Earth itself. This cultivation of a compassionate image as a means of generating warmth is based on the understanding that feelings of warmth, tenderness, and love normally begin through experiencing these feelings from others, and that creating one's own inner compassionate image can help provide a source from which one can learn to receive warmth, tenderness, and nonjudgmental acceptance.

III. Self-Acceptance and Self-Forgiveness Exercise [20 minutes]

The following exercise, which is aimed at learning how to be more self-accepting and self-forgiving, has two aspects.ⁱⁱⁱ The first involves exploring ways in which, in the face of reacting negatively to something that one did, one tries to understand the underlying need(s) that brought about this self-reproachful reaction. Once we connect to that need we may experience any number of emotions, such as sadness, frustration, regret, disappointment, hopelessness, and so on. These feelings of sadness and disappointment help us move away from guilt, self-recrimination, and negative judgment and allow us to be more accepting of ourselves.

The second aspect involves learning to let go of our negative self-judgment on the basis of making an empathetic connection to the needs underlying the things that we did, which are the supposed reasons for our self-reproach and negative judgments.

In summing up these two aspects, Marshall Rosenberg writes, *“An important aspect of self-compassion is to be able to empathetically hold both parts of ourselves, the self that regrets a past action and the self that took the action in the first place. The process of mourning and self-forgiveness frees us in the direction of learning and growing. In connecting moment by moment to our needs, we increase our creative capacity to act in harmony with them”* (Nonviolent Communication, p. 134).

This could be performed as a **dyad exercise**, with the instructor inviting a volunteer to demonstrate this in front of the group first. The volunteer is invited to share an experience of negative self-judgment and the subsequent self-recriminations that might have ensued. The instructor then responds to him/her, on the basis of a reflective listening, helping him/her explore what might have been the underlying need that could have lead to the initial negative emotional reaction to this situation. When the recognition of the need behind the emotional reaction arises, instead of being self-critical, the person can recognize how a more compassionate and self-forgiving evaluation could be framed for this emotional incident. Then ask the participants to form into dyads with two persons facing each other and instruct them to do this exercise, each person sharing their experience while the other listens and offers empathy by helping to connect their feelings with needs.

This exercise is more dynamic done in pairs. Alternatively, this exercise would take the form of a guided thought process lead by the instructor in the following manner:

- If necessary, readjust your sitting position so that you feel most comfortable and relaxed.
- Take three deep breaths, bringing each one all the way down to your abdomen, and then gently releasing it. (*Pause*)
- Now think of a time when you did something that you did not like, and as a result, reproached yourself for. This could be, for example, a harsh word you said to a colleague or a family member, and then felt bad about. The specifics of the actual incident are not important; what is important is the recollection of how you engaged in negative self-judgment. (*Pause*)
- Ask yourself, “What was the unmet need I was trying to fulfill when I used that harsh word?” (*Pause*)
- Recognize that, although the actual approach, such as using abusive language, was not skillful, the underlying need that prompted your action was legitimate. With this awareness, now allow yourself to experience feelings such as sadness, disappointment, and remorse, rather than guilt and shame. (*Pause*)

- As you touch upon the underlying need that led to the action which brought about the negative self-judgment, stay with it for a while. (*Pause*)
 - Now, breathing out deeply, let go of any tension in the body, let go of any tightness in the mind, and, reflecting on your earlier self-reproachful thoughts, silently say to yourself, "*I can let this go. I will let this go.*"
 - Finally, imagine that you feel utterly free and expansive in your chest, and breathe out deeply a few times.
-

IV. Meditation Script

Step 3a: Compassion for Oneself

Welcome to compassion cultivation practice. This is Step 3 in a six-step meditation process aimed at cultivating and nurturing compassionate heart and mind within us. This is part one of the third step, which involves cultivating compassion for oneself.

Defining compassion

Compassion is the *wish that others not suffer*, accompanied by the *urge to help end the suffering of others*. When compassion arises in our heart, our mind is free from hatred, negative judgment, and obsessive self-focus. It opens our heart, expands our awareness, and engenders a feeling of tenderness that helps us connect with others. So cultivating compassion is a source of peace in our heart and mind. Compassion for oneself is extending these same sentiments towards yourself – being motivated and acting to reduce your own suffering and treating yourself with compassion when you are suffering.

Distinguishing Compassion for Oneself from Self-Esteem

Compassion involves non-judgmental concern towards, and motivation to alleviate suffering. Self-esteem involves believing oneself to be better than average, comparing oneself to others, and is conditional to success in domains that one believes to be important. Self-esteem is individuating and impossible to maintain. Self-compassion is based on interdependence and non-judgmental care/nurturance (Kristin Neff).

Settling the mind

First, sit comfortably and stretch your shoulders to release any residual tension. Then, when you are ready, take a series of five deep cleansing breaths. As you do so, release all the worries and tensions of the day. [1:30]

Now, relax your control over your breath, allowing it to settle into its own natural pace, neither too fast nor too slow. Then, in silence, mentally count each cycle of breath, starting with “one ...,” “two ...,” up to “five ...,” and repeat this process of counting for a while. [2:00]

Then bring your attention into the present moment by focusing on the natural, rhythmic movement of your breath. Placing your focus on the subtle sensations just beneath your nostrils aroused by your breathing, let your mind rest on this movement of breath, simply observing the rhythm of in-breath and out-breath. Release yourself from any thoughts projecting into the past or any anticipation related the future. And settle into the only reality there is now: the present. Let your mind rest simply in the awareness of the gentle rhythm of your breathing. [1:30]

Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one

With a relaxed but focused mind, picture someone for whom you feel a great amount of love. Notice the feeling of tenderness and warmth this brings in your heart and how this makes you feel ... (Pause) Now think of a time when this person was going through a difficult time. Notice how you feel a sense of concern based on a feeling of tenderness toward your loved one ... (Pause) Notice how you feel for his or her pain ... (Pause) ... and have an urge to reach out and help. [1:30]

Then, with these feelings and sentiments, silently recite the phrases:

“May you be free from pain and suffering
May you be free from fear
May you find peace and joy.” [2:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that your loved one achieves happiness and freedom from suffering ... and rejoice in the thought of his or her happiness. [1:00]

Step 3a: Compassion for oneself

3a.1 Think of a time when you experienced great difficulty and suffered a lot. Perhaps you were physically ill, or experienced a tragic conflict with someone you care about, or did not succeed at something that you really wanted, or felt belittled by someone you knew, such as a work colleague. *(Pause)* Notice how you feel about yourself when you think of such an experience ... How does your heart feel? *(Pause)* Do you feel self-pitying and small? *(Pause)* Do self-critical judgments arise in your mind, making you believe at some level that you’re no good and that you deserved what you experienced? *(Pause)* Let your normal habitual responses arise to this scenario of your suffering. [2:00]

3a.2 Now contemplate whether there are more constructive ways of relating to yourself, especially in the face of suffering and difficulties. Or just hold the intention that you really don’t want to suffer. Just as, when confronted with the suffering of a loved one, you responded with a feeling of concern, tenderness, and the urge to do something about it, recognize that you *can* respond to your own suffering—failures, disappointments, and pain—in a similar way, with a sense of nonjudgmental concern, tenderness, and the urge to do something about it. [1:00]

3a.3 Contemplate how it would feel if you were to relate to your suffering with a greater degree of acceptance instead of self-pity. [1:00]

Contemplate how it would feel if you were to relate to yourself with tenderness and a sense of caring instead of self-recrimination and negative judgment. [1:00]

Contemplate how it would feel if you were to relate to yourself with more tenderness, warmth, and true acceptance, with the thought, “*Yes, I am okay.*” [1:00]

3a.4 Then, with feelings of tenderness, warmth, and caring toward yourself, silently repeat these phrases:

“May I be free from pain and suffering ...
May I be free from fear and anxiety ...
May I experience peace and joy ...

“May I be free from pain and suffering ...
May I be free from fear and anxiety ...
May I experience peace and joy.” [2:00]

3a.5 Now imagine yourself as a small child, a two-year-old toddler perhaps, free yet vulnerable, running around and often knocking things over along the way ... Or, if it is more helpful, imagine an age that you can remember from your childhood ... Wouldn't you feel instinctively protective toward this child? ... Instead of negative judgment, criticism, and reprimand, wouldn't you relate to this child with tenderness and a natural sense of caring? [1:00]

Let this feeling of tenderness and caring you feel toward this “childhood you” permeate your heart, and then silently repeat the phrases:

“May you be free from pain and suffering ...
May you be free from fear and anxiety ...
May you experience peace and joy ...

“May you be free from pain and suffering ...
May you be free from fear and anxiety ...
May you experience peace and joy.” [2:00]

Cultivating a compassionate image

3a.6 Now cultivate a compassionate image that could represent a source of wisdom, strength, love, and caring for you. This could be the image of a wise person whom you deeply admire and respect, or it could be the image of a light at your heart, or the image of an expansive and deep blue ocean, or a firmly rooted tree with magnificent thick foliage; or, if you are a religious person, it could be an icon that has deep meaning for you. Cultivate this image in your mind. It is not necessary to actually have a specific visual image; simply to think of such an image is adequate. [1:00]

Feel that in the presence of this compassionate image you can be completely yourself—nothing more, nothing less. There is no need for pretension; you do not have to try to be someone other than yourself. There is no judgment, no critical voice of reprimand; instead, what you find is simply acceptance, with warmth and tenderness. Dwell on this feeling of receiving unconditional acceptance ... What does this feel like? ... Do you feel the slowing of your heart, a deep feeling of letting go? [2:00]

3a.7 Retain this compassionate image as you breathe. Then, as you breathe in, visualize warm light rays emerging from your compassionate image which touch all parts of your body. As these light rays touch you, imagine that they soothe you, ease your suffering, and give you strength and wisdom. [2:00]

While continuing with this meditation, silently repeat these phrases:

“May I be free from pain and suffering ...
May I be free from fear and anxiety ...
May I experience peace and joy ...

“May I be free from pain and suffering ...
May I be free from fear and anxiety ...
May I experience peace and joy.” [2:00]

Let these aspirations fill your heart, and rest your mind simply in the feelings these aspirations evoke in your heart. [1:00]

Conclusion

3a.8 Now, as this session draws to a close, let your heart be touched by this feeling of warmth, tenderness, and caring for your own needs ... and rest your mind simply on the natural rhythm of your breath. [0:30]

[End of meditation 3a]

NOTES

ⁱ For a clear and succinct presentation of how to distinguish between languages of observation and languages of evaluation or judgment, see Marshal Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* (Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press, 2003), especially chapter 3.

ⁱⁱ Compassionate Mind Training, or CMT, was developed as a group therapy for people with high shame and self-critical temperaments. See Paul Gilbert, “Compassionate Mind Training for People with High Shame and Self-Criticism: Overview and Pilot Study of a Group Therapy Approach,” *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy* 13 (2006): 353-79.

ⁱⁱⁱ The exercises on self-acceptance and self-forgiveness presented here are based on and adapted from Marshall Rosenberg’s *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, chapter 9, where he outlines practices called “NVC Mourning” and “Self-Forgiveness.”

WEEK FOUR: *Step 3b – Loving-Kindness for Oneself*

I. Overview and Class Plan

THEMES: Being a friend to yourself; embracing your legitimate natural aspiration for happiness; connection; gratitude

1. Settling the mind and intention-setting exercises [10 min]

- Begin with three deep, diaphragmatic cleansing breaths; then settle into a rhythmic breathing, either using the counting exercise, simply following the breath, or using a combination of both.
- Then visualize lying on grass and reflect on the following three questions as they relate to yourself:
 - i. *If anything were possible, what would I really wish to find in my life?*
 - ii. *If anything were possible, how would I really wish to develop as a human being?*
 - iii. *What would I really wish to offer the world?*

2. Check-in about the previous week's home practice [10 min]

3. Pedagogy, including discussion (for details, see [page]) [30 min]

4. Self-appreciation exercise (for the description, see [page]) [30 min]

5. Guided meditation on loving-kindness for oneself (for the script, see [page]) [30 min]

6. Home practice [10 min]

- 20 minutes of daily meditation on loving-kindness for oneself
- As an informal practice, undertake the following exercises:
 - i. When there is a quiet moment in your day, and when you feel like it, ask yourself, *"In my heart of hearts, what do I really want in my life?"*
 - ii. If you find yourself yearning for meaning, wholeness, and connection in your life, acknowledge these and recognize them to be an essential part of your being.
 - iii. When you find yourself caught up in a forceful emotion, such as anger, sadness, disappointment, or frustration, see if you can connect these feelings with an underlying need that you are seeking to fulfill – and ask yourself whether the strong feelings get you any closer to fulfilling this need.
 - iv. Learn to recognize and appreciate the simple everyday joys that come your way during the day.
 - v. Do something nice for yourself each day, however small.
 - vi. Every day (in the evening), list up to three things you feel grateful for.

7. Closing gesture [1 min]

II. Pedagogy

Loving-Kindness for Oneself

Briefly review Step 3a and then present a background introduction to this Step 3b of the CCT program. While Step 3a focused on the challenge of cultivating compassion for oneself, Step 3b relates to the cultivation of loving-kindness in relation to oneself.

Revisit the definition of compassion and elaborate further on its characteristics. Then explain the significance of this particular step in the course, especially underlining the importance of cultivating a loving and friendly attitude toward oneself. The key attributes of the quality of *loving-kindness* include warmth, caring, tenderness, connection, and wishing success and joy for the object of your feeling. Loving-kindness is unconditional in its wish for happiness; it's nonjudgmental, open, and future-oriented, rather than conditional, judgmental, recriminatory, and stuck in the past. The aim of the practices in this Step 3b is to learn to extend these qualities of loving-kindness to oneself.

Among others, the following points should be included in the explanation:

- A deeper recognition of the fact that aspiration for happiness is an essential part of one's own being, and a legitimate, fundamental trait that we share with all beings
- The importance of learning how to be a friend unto oneself
- The importance of learning to appreciate our natural qualities, such as our capacities for empathy, love, connection with others, and joy, all of which reflect the presence of natural goodness within
- The importance of learning how to take joy in life, bring awareness to the wonder that is life, to savor, and celebrate one's existence
- The importance of developing the ability to feel a sense of gratitude, and forgiveness in one's life (Mention Bob Emmons's work on gratitude practice and benefits for mental and physical health, and mention Fred Luskin's work on forgiveness and benefits for mental and physical health.)
- Also, Barbara Fredrickson's work on how loving-kindness meditation increased positive emotions, which in turn, has the following benefits:
 - i. Increased a sense of purpose in life
 - ii. Increased social support
 - iii. Decreased depressive symptoms
 - iv. Increased life satisfaction

Science for fourth psychoeducational module on loving-kindness for oneself

- In addition to the Fredrickson study, this week we can refer to:
 - i. Living well: A self-determination theory perspective on eudaimonia. (Ryan, Huta, & Deci 2008). *Journal of Happiness Studies*.
 - ii. Optimal self-esteem is contingent: Intrinsic versus extrinsic and upward versus downward contingencies (Vonk & Smit 2012). *European Journal of Personality*.

- Ryan, Huta, & Deci's paper addresses two main approaches to wellness: the hedonic way, which is outcome-focused on happiness and pleasure, and the eudaimonic way, which is content and process-focused on living well, e.g. the pursuit of intrinsic values and goals; the exercising of autonomy and one's own volition or acting in a consensual manner; being mindful and aware; and satisfying one's universal need for competence and connection (self-determination theory). The eudaimonic way of life is a better means to foster prosociality and wellbeing in the long run. The article suggests that hedonic values don't lead to either individual or collective well-being, while eudaimonic values can lead to individual and collective well-being, a meaningful and complete life, as well as more enduring and stable hedonic happiness. "The more directly one aims to maximize pleasure and avoid pain the more likely one is to produce instead a life bereft of depth, meaning, and community" (141).
- Vonk & Smit discuss how intrinsic contingent self-esteem (a self-esteem that flexibly fluctuates depending on how autonomous and attuned with one's core values our actions are) is healthier than an extrinsic self-esteem or a non-contingent self-esteem. Intrinsic contingency positively correlates with authenticity, self-compassion, and personal well-being. External contingencies, such as social approval, negatively correlate with these, and positively correlate with less stable and lower self-esteem and more hostility to ego threats. True self-esteem requires an experience of a decline in self-esteem when one is untrue to one's own values and goals. In this case, one has a healthier psychological response to the ups and downs of life. When self-esteem is dependent upon external factors (e.g., approval by others, one's appearance, etc.) this results in more negative affect and lower well-being, positive affect, self-compassion, and authenticity. Although some have argued that non-contingent self-esteem might be optimal, Vonk and Smit argue that there are problems with noncontingent self-esteem. Thus intrinsic contingency is perhaps optimal, as those with higher intrinsic contingency report greater well-being, positive affect, self-compassion, and authenticity.

Loving-kindness for oneself and egoistic self-love

It's crucial to differentiate between what is being proposed here – namely, the cultivation of loving-kindness for oneself – and egoistic self-love. Thinking of and caring for one's own needs and well-being do not necessarily entail a selfish, egoistic approach to life. Whereas egotistical self-love has a tendency to close one's heart, narrow one's vision, and cause one to be self-absorbed, i.e. oblivious to other people's feelings and needs, loving-kindness for oneself tends to make one become more aware of, and empathetic toward, others' feelings and needs – as a part of common humanity, towards whom you wish may attain happiness, you also wish happiness for yourself. Because loving-kindness provides a source of self-nurturing and self-soothing, it has the effect of self-rejuvenation, so that one naturally relates to others and the world around one in a more beneficial way. When one feels full in heart, naturally one tends to be more generous in one's treatment of others. Most critically, loving-kindness for oneself enables one to respond to the events in one's life, including pain and suffering, with greater openness and acceptance, rather than denial or resentment. In brief, some discussion of how caring for one's own needs does not automatically entail an egoistic thought process, or indulgence in unsustainable hedonic or material pleasures, is essential so that participants do not feel even a tinge of guilt in undertaking this stage of the CCT program.

III. Self-Appreciation Exercise

The following exercise is aimed at cultivating greater self-appreciation.

This exercise is performed by dividing the group into pairs, with two exercise partners facing each other. Then proceed as follows:

- Once people are comfortably settled in their seats facing each other, ask them to greet each other and decide who will go first. Begin by closing your eyes, bringing your attention to your own breath, and settling the mind. Next, open your eyes, look into each other's eyes, and silently but deeply acknowledge each other's presence. [1 min]
 - Then instruct them to begin the exercise by one person asking the other, *"Tell me something about yourself – something about your own life, your qualities, or something that you did – that makes you feel good about yourself."* Better to keep the question simple: *"Tell me something that makes you feel good about yourself"* and add the details during the instructions.
 - The other person then recounts something about himself or herself that he or she feels very good about.
 - In response, the partner in the exercise nods his/her head and simply says *"Thank you"* after each thing that is shared. The listener then repeats the question. It is helpful to acknowledge that *this restriction is contrived and can feel uncomfortable*, but is intentional. Invite participants to notice how it feels, both listening and being heard, when their partner does not offer feedback. [3 min]
 - Next, switch roles and repeat the process. [3 min]
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IV. Meditation Script

Step 3b: Loving-Kindness for Oneself

Welcome to compassion cultivation practice. This is part two of Step 3 in a six-step meditation process aimed at cultivating and nurturing compassionate heart and mind within us. This step involves cultivating loving-kindness for oneself.

Settling the mind

First, sit comfortably and stretch your shoulders to release any residual tension. Then, when you are ready, take a series of five deep cleansing breaths. As you do so, release all the worries and tensions of the day. [1:30]

Now, relax your control over your breath, allowing it to settle into its own natural pace, neither too fast nor too slow. Then, in silence, mentally count each cycle of breath, starting with “one ...,” “two ...,” up to “five ...,” and repeat this process of counting for a while. [2:00]

Then bring your attention into the present moment by focusing on the natural, rhythmic movement of your breath. Placing your focus on the subtle sensations just beneath your nostrils aroused by your breathing, let your mind rest on this movement of breath, simply observing the rhythm of in-breath and out-breath. Release yourself from any thoughts projecting into the past or any anticipation related the future. And settle into the only reality there is now: the present. Let your mind rest simply in the awareness of the gentle rhythm of your breathing. [1:30]

Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one

With a relaxed but focused mind, picture someone for whom you feel a great amount of love. Notice the feeling of tenderness and warmth this brings in your heart and how this makes you feel ... (Pause) Now think of a time when this person was going through a difficult time. Notice how you feel a sense of concern based on a feeling of tenderness toward your loved one ... (Pause) Notice how you feel for his or her pain ... (Pause) ... and have an urge to reach out and help. [1:30]

Then, with these feelings and sentiments, silently recite the phrases:

“May you be happy ...
May you be free from pain and suffering ...
May you find peace and joy.” [2:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that your loved one achieves happiness and freedom from suffering ... and rejoice in the thought of his or her happiness. [1:00]

Compassion for oneself

Think of a time when you underwent a difficult situation that did not make you feel good about yourself. You felt, angry, disappointed, or embarrassed about yourself. (Pause) Notice how you feel about yourself when you think of such an experience.... How does your heart feel? What kind of physical sensations are you experiencing? In your chest, in your abdomen? (Pause) Do you feel self-pitying and small? (Pause) Do self-critical judgments arise in your mind, making you believe at some level that you’re no good and that you deserved what you experienced? (Pause)

Now contemplate what it would feel like if you chose to respond to such a situation with nonjudgmental concern and tenderness toward yourself ... How it would feel if you related to it

with a spirit of greater acceptance instead of self-pity ... with tenderness and a sense of caring toward yourself instead of self-recrimination and negative judgment. [1:00]

Then, with feelings of tenderness, warmth, and caring toward yourself, silently repeat these phrases:

“May I be free from suffering ...
May I be free from fear and anxiety ...
May I experience peace and joy ...

“May I be free from suffering ...
May I be free from fear and anxiety ...
May I experience peace and joy.” [2:00]

Feel with your heart these wishes for you to be free from suffering, fear, and anxiety. [1:00]

3b. Loving-kindness for oneself

Acknowledging your natural aspiration for happiness

3b.1 Now, with this compassion for yourself, with warmth, tenderness, and acceptance of yourself, ask yourself the following questions: “*In my heart of hearts, what is it that I truly aspire toward? What am I looking for in my life? What am I hoping to find?*” [1:00]

Now, if your initial responses to these questions remain on a superficial level—concerned with little more than accumulating those sensory experiences that are momentarily pleasurable and avoiding those that are momentarily unpleasant—try to go deeper. See if you can uncover an inner yearning for something longer-lasting than fleeting sensory stimulation, something that conveys a genuine sense of well-being. [1:30]

As you reflect on these questions, see if you can discern a yearning that rises up from some place deep within your heart, a yearning that expresses itself in so many different ways. For example:

- Whenever you have felt scattered or fragmented, can you recall the spontaneous longing you had for wholeness, for coherence?
- When you have felt ill, uncomfortable, or simply out of sorts, did you notice your desire for a sense of physical, mental, or emotional well-being?
- When your thoughts are murky or confused, do you notice your natural desire for clarity?
- If you are feeling even slightly restless or agitated, do you notice how strong your yearning is for true peace of mind?
- When encountering life’s many disappointments, or simply feeling a vague sense of dissatisfaction, do you notice how deeply you long for contentment?
- And when faced with frustration and a feeling of being limited and hemmed in, isn’t there something deep inside you that longs for fulfillment, that yearns to unleash all your creative abilities? [2:30]

These are all different ways that our heartfelt yearning for what we may call “genuine happiness” can manifest itself. See if you can recognize how deeply rooted this yearning is within yourself. [1:00]

3b.2 Acknowledge this aspiration for genuine happiness—for meaning, for wholeness, for inner peace, for fulfillment—as a fundamental aspect of your being. Recognize that this aspiration for genuine happiness—this care and concern we all have for our own welfare—lies at the very core of your being, and simply acknowledge its presence deep within you. [2:00]

3b.3 Next, with a firm recognition of this yearning for genuine happiness as an essential part of your being, silently repeat the following phrases:

“May I be happy ...
May I find peace and joy.” [2:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that you achieve happiness, peace, and tranquility.... [1:00]

Being a friend unto yourself

3b.4 Next, let go of all your thoughts and simply relax.... Then bring to mind something about yourself that makes you feel genuinely good about yourself.... This could be something you did, or a time when you were generous in your heart and were caring toward someone ... If nothing specific comes up, think of the fact that you have the natural capacity to care for others, to love someone, or to receive love and caring from others.... The very fact that you are here, participating in this course, is a proof that you care about being connected to others, feeling love and being loved, and experiencing the beauty of a heart that is open and caring. [1:00]

3b.5 Now, think of a time when you felt that someone offered you genuine unconditional love.... This could be a family member, a friend, a teacher, or a colleague who was there for you with full presence, even if only for a brief moment ... someone who simply listened to you, with no judgment, no resentment, no impatience, in a spirit of timelessness ... How does it feel when you think of this? ... You feel unconditionally accepted, affirmed, and valued. [1:00]

Imagine what it would be like if you were to show this same degree of unconditional acceptance, full presence, and regard to yourself. What would it feel like if you gave yourself this kind of affirmation and value?

“I take joy in who I am.
I shall be a friend unto myself.
I rejoice in the celebration of my life.” [2:00]

3b.6 Set the intention, “From now on, I will be a true friend unto myself. I will show greater appreciation toward myself. I will be warm, friendly, and caring toward myself.” [1:00]

Gratitude and rejoicing

3b.7 Then, contemplate all the good things you have been fortunate to receive in your life—the presence of someone in your life who loves you, the presence of someone whom you deeply care for, living in a free country, having precious opportunities to grow emotionally and spiritually as

a human. With such contemplation, cultivate a deep sense of rejoicing and silently repeat this phrase:

"I rejoice in all the blessings I have received in my life.
I am grateful for all these precious gifts." [2:00]

3b.8 Let this feeling of gratitude permeate your heart, like a warm glow of light entering your heart, and stay in it for a little while. [1:00]

Conclusion

Now, as this session draws to a close, let your heart be touched by this feeling warmth, tenderness, and caring for your own needs ... and rest your mind simply on the natural rhythm of your breath. [0:30]

[End of meditation 3b]

In the class, after the guided meditation, return to class plan for instruction on informal, "in the world" practices related to the themes of this class.

WEEK FIVE: *Step 4 – Embracing Shared Common Humanity and Developing Appreciation of Others*

I. Overview and Class Plan

THEMES: Recognizing our connection with others; appreciating the contributions of others to your life; empathic connection

1. Settling the mind and intention-setting exercises [10 min]

- Begin with three deep, diaphragmatic cleansing breaths; then settle into a rhythmic breathing, either using the counting exercise, simply following the breath, or using a combination of both.
- Then visualize lying on grass and reflect on the following three questions as they relate to a loved one (whether a person or your pet) that you unconditionally care about:
 - i. *If anything were possible, what would I really wish my loved one to find in his or her life?*
 - ii. *If anything were possible, how would I really wish my loved one to develop as a human being (or as a pet, if that is my chosen loved one)?*
 - iii. *What would I really wish my loved one to offer the world? I'd suggest a difference approach for this class. Move it outward. This particular imagery does not seem well suited for the theme of empathic connection.*

2. Check-in about the previous week's home practice [10 min]

3. Pedagogy (for details, see [page]) [30 min]

As part of the pedagogy here, the instructor could use a creative visual presentation, such as a film clip, to powerfully illustrate the quality of empathy. One such example is the classic scene at the library from the German director Wim Wenders' 1987 film *Wings of Desire*.

4. Empathic Attunement exercise (for the description, see [page]) [20 min]

5. Guided meditation on Embracing Shared Common Humanity and Developing Appreciation of Others (for the script, see [page]) [30 min]

6. Home practice [5 min]

- 15-20 minutes of daily meditation on embracing shared common humanity and developing appreciation of others. When working with the "neutral" person, try using the same person each day and see if they remain "neutral".
- As an informal practice, in your everyday activity, every now and then consciously notice someone (a friend, an acquaintance, or a total stranger) and silently wish that he or she be happy, well, free of fear, and at ease.

II. Pedagogy

Embracing Shared Common Humanity and Developing Appreciation of Others

Briefly review Steps 2 and 3—loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one and for oneself—and then introduce Step 4. This step involves establishing the basis for compassion toward others—ideally, toward all beings. Here may be the appropriate place to go deeper into the meanings of compassion. These include, among others, the following aspects:

- The cognitive aspect of being aware of others' suffering
- The cognitive ability to empathize with others' situations, which entails some form of identification with other people
- The emotional aspect of allowing oneself to be moved by others' needs and suffering
- Openness in responding to others nonjudgmentally with respect to their situations
- The motivational aspect of wanting to do something about it

Stages in the cultivation of compassion toward others

Some modern researchers on altruism, especially Kristen Renwick Monroe (*Heart of Altruism*), have suggested that **what unites all altruists is their natural ability to connect with others on the basis of common humanity. In other words, altruists are able to identify easily with others who are in dire need.** (Perhaps read an interview or two with rescuers of Jews in Nazi Germany from Monroe's book.) This insight—that what unites altruists is an almost visceral belief in our shared common humanity—resonates with the classical Buddhist understanding of the fundamental connectedness between all beings, which enables the process of developing compassion for all beings. In this process, two key qualities are cultivated: (1) a deep recognition of the basic sameness between self and others with respect to the shared aspiration for happiness and wish to overcome suffering, and (2) an equally deep recognition of the profound interconnectedness of self and others with respect to survival and well-being.

Thus three crucial steps are identified in this process of cultivating compassion for others:

- Cultivating recognition of the *basic sameness of self and others*, through a deep recognition of the common aspiration for happiness and freedom from suffering that we all share
- Cultivating an *appreciation of others* through a deep recognition of how intimately our lives and well-being are *interconnected* with theirs. Illustrate this nature of interconnectedness by means of such mundane examples as how many individual people, from so many different geography, cultural, and religious backgrounds, must have been involved in making it possible for us to have, say, the loaf of bread on the dining table, the shirt that we wear, the computer that we use, and the clean water that we need.
- On the basis of these two recognitions, allowing a genuine sense of *loving, empathic concern* for others to arise in our hearts

Explain the process of this development by encouraging participants to first recognize how, in our ordinary self-centered way of relating to the world, we already feel a sense of concern for the well-being of *some* people, but we do not extend the same concern to *everyone*. We easily

empathize with the suffering and problems of our loved ones, but toward a stranger, or someone who does not mean much to us, we generally tend to remain indifferent. Worse still, instead of feeling a sense of concern for our adversaries' pain and suffering, we may sometimes even rejoice in their misfortune. **The key challenge here is to be able to identify with those who are not close to us, and relate to them at this level of shared common humanity, thus laying the basis for the arising of compassion toward them.**

Science for fifth psychoeducational module on embracing shared common humanity

- Two studies that may be especially useful here are:
 - i. The neural basis of empathy (Bernhardt & Singer 2012). *Annual Review of Neuroscience*.
 - ii. From dehumanization and objectification to rehumanization: Neuroimaging studies on the building blocks of empathy (Fiske 2009). *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci., Barcelona Social Brain Conference NYAS Proceedings*.
- Bernhardt & Singer (2012) is a good reference for the distinction between empathy and compassion. Empathy to another's suffering results in a certain contagion of feelings that causes distress and therefore aversion toward the person who inspired the empathy, while compassion doesn't include this distress, and instead elicits feelings of loving, caring, and desire to help.
- In "From Dehumanization ..." Fiske presents a very interesting view: The first step to feeling empathy is realizing that the other person has a mind. According to Fiske, considering another person as fully human requires appreciating their thought processes. Or in other words, humanity stems from within – our empathy toward another stems from what we perceive to be, or not to be, within another person. This process happens, or fails to happen, in the medial prefrontal cortex. The medial prefrontal cortex does not activate for objects in the same way as it does for people. But it activates differently for different people as well – it activates more for those who are perceived as warm and competent (but not threatening) and, according to the paper, very little or not at all for those who are perceived to be in an "outgroup," like drug addicts or the homeless. This last finding is consistent with other self-reported tests which showed that people do not attribute a mind or an intention to outcasts. Both dehumanization and objectification are characterized by decreased activation of the medial prefrontal cortex in social cognition.

According to Fiske, these trends of the mind can be reversed by conscious thought processes. For example, Fiske suggests that wondering what kind of a vegetable a person likes activates the medial prefrontal cortex and halts the kind of amygdala activation that is associated with viewing racial outgroups. That such a small and simple thought can lead to an important shift in point of view suggests that the brain can not only dehumanize, but also rehumanize.

To perform the study, Fiske called subjects into the laboratory and let them view images of different kinds of people – homeless people; drug addicts; and people who would be perceived as warm and competent, cold and competent, or warm but incompetent. The researchers wanted to know how differently the brain perceives each of these groups, and the emotions each group triggers. The results suggest that people feel empathy toward others selectively, depending on their views about how those others exist in their own minds. In other words, people focus on what kinds of thought processes we characterize

others as having, such as whether their intentions are good or whether they are capable of executing them. People tend to feel less or no empathy for outcasts (whom they dehumanize) and those they perceive as both cold and competent (whom they objectify). However, thinking about the likes and dislikes of another can lead to greater empathy toward anyone, regardless of the group they may or may not represent.

III. Empathic Attunement Exercise

The following is an exercise on sharing sorrow and disappointments, and receiving and offering empathic attunement, in the context of two participants who are fully present for each other and who offer and receive empathy by means of silent, reflective listening to each other. This exercise is performed by grouping the course participants into pairs. Then proceed as follows:

- Once everyone is settled into pairs, the two partners greet each other.
- One person then begins by sharing with the other something he or she is having great difficulty with, or is disappointed by or saddened about. While this is being shared, the other person looks into the eyes of the exercise partner and gives the other person his or her full presence; one needs to be there, fully present, attentive and engaged.
- With full attention, the listener imagines being his or her exercise partner and imaginatively lives through the experiences being shared, as though he or she herself is undergoing these experiences.
- Once the partner has concluded, in response to everything that is shared, the listener simply says “*Thank you* [5 min]
- Then switch roles and repeat the process. This time the one who spoke earlier takes the role of a listener and simply says “*Thank you*” in response to the other’s sharing of sorrow and disappointments. [5 min]

Process the experience of sharing in this exercise. What impact did you notice from this structure?

Process the experience of listening in the context of this exercise. What impact did this structure have on your experience?

IV. Meditation Script

Step 4: Embracing Shared Common Humanity and Developing Appreciation of Others

Welcome to compassion cultivation practice. This is Step 4 in a six-step meditation process aimed at cultivating and nurturing compassionate heart and mind within us. This fourth step involves establishing the basis, shared common humanity, for generating compassion for all beings (i.e. global compassion).

Settling the mind

Choose a comfortable sitting posture and stretch your shoulders to release any residual tension. Then, when you are ready, take a series of five deep cleansing breaths, as we practiced before. As you do so, release all the worries and tensions of the day. **[1:30]**

Now, relax your control over your breath, allowing it to settle into its own natural pace, neither too fast nor too slow. Then, in silence, mentally count each cycle of breath, starting with “one ...,” “two ...,” up to “five ...,” and repeat this process of counting for a while. **[1:00]**

Then bring your attention into the present moment by focusing on the natural, rhythmic movement of your breath. Placing your focus on the subtle sensations just beneath your nostrils aroused by your breathing, let your mind rest on this movement of breath, simply observing the rhythm of in-breath and out-breath. Release yourself from any thoughts projecting into the past or any anticipation related the future. And settle into the only reality there is now: the present. Let your mind rest simply in the awareness of the gentle rhythm of your breathing. **[1:00]**

Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one

With a relaxed but focused mind, picture someone for whom you feel a great amount of love. Notice the feeling of tenderness and warmth this brings in your heart and how this makes you feel ... *(Pause)* Now think of a time when this person was going through a difficult time. Notice how you feel a sense of concern based on a feeling of tenderness toward your loved one ... *(Pause)* Notice how your heart feels for his or her pain ... *(Pause)* ... and have an urge to reach out and help. **[1:30]**

Then, with these feelings and sentiments, silently recite the phrases:

“May you be happy ...
May you be free from suffering ...
May you find peace and joy.” **[1:00]**

Feel with all your heart the wish that your loved one achieves happiness and freedom from suffering ... and rejoice in his or her happiness. **[1:00]**

Loving-kindness and compassion for oneself

Think of a time when you experienced great difficulty and suffered a lot. Notice how you feel when you think of such an experience ... How does your heart feel? *(Pause)* Then, with feelings of tenderness, warmth, and caring toward yourself, silently repeat these phrases:

"May I be free from suffering ...
May I experience peace and joy." [1:30]

Then, with a firm recognition that aspiration for genuine happiness is an essential part of your being, silently repeat the following phrases:

"May I be happy ...
May I be free from suffering ...
May I find peace and joy." [1:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that you may achieve happiness and freedom from suffering. [0:30]

Step 4: Establishing the basis for compassion toward others

Shared common aspiration for happiness

4.1 Now, picture someone whom you hold dear, someone you find it easy to care for and love. This could be a family member or a close friend. Don't just think about the person in the abstract, but vividly feel his or her presence in front of you. [1:00]

Notice the pleasant feelings that form within you as you picture this dear one, and notice how much you enjoy those feelings. For a moment imagine being this person, and see how easy it is for you to acknowledge that he or she has the same aspiration for genuine happiness that you yourself do. [1:00]

4.2 Now bring to mind another person. This time choose someone you recognize but have not had significant contact with, someone for whom you have no special sense of either closeness or distance. Think of a real person you see quite often, perhaps someone in one of your classes or someone you see at your workplace, a bus driver, or someone who works at your local café. [1:00]

Notice that the feelings that arise in you as you picture this person are quite indifferent. We are not usually concerned whether or not such a person is happy. But now try to imagine being this person. Imagine this person's life, his or her hopes and fears, which are every bit as textured, as multilayered, and as rich and diverse as your own. [1:30]

Now recognize the profound similarity between yourself and this person at the fundamental human level, and cultivate this thought: "*Just like me, this person also wishes to achieve happiness and to avoid even the slightest suffering.*" [2:00]

4.3 Then bring to mind a person whom you may have difficulty with, someone who you find annoying, irresponsible or irritating, who you think has done you harm or who you feel dislikes you unfairly, or someone who you think takes satisfaction in your misfortune. Picture this person in front of you. [1:00]

Acknowledge the uncomfortable feelings you experience as you bring this person to mind, and how this thought reminds you of painful interactions with him or her. Notice how you react to these uncomfortable feelings with aversion. [1:00]

Then put yourself into his or her shoes for a moment, and see if you can recognize that he or she is an object of deep concern to someone, he or she is a parent or a spouse and a dear friend to someone ... Acknowledge that this person, too, shares the same fundamental aspiration for happiness that you have ... Let your mind abide in this awareness for a while. [1:30]

4.4 Finally, picture all three people together in front of you, and remember that they all equally share a basic yearning to be happy and to be free from suffering. On this level there is no difference at all between these three people; in this fundamental respect, they are all exactly the same ... See if you can mentally relate to each of these three people from that perspective, from this basis of the common humanity that we all share. [1:30]

This shared aspiration for happiness and wish to overcome suffering are a common bond that unites us with all other beings ... Let your mind abide in this awareness for a while. [1:30]

With this deep recognition that aspiration for happiness and the wish to overcome suffering are common to all, silently repeat this phrase: *"Just as I do, all others aspire toward happiness and wish to overcome suffering."* [2:00]

Interconnection with and appreciation of others

4.5 Now contemplate this thought: *"Not only do I share with others the same fundamental aspiration for happiness and wish to overcome suffering, but my life and the lives of the countless beings on this planet are intertwined in a network of relationships on which I completely depend for my survival and well-being."* [1:00]

Consider the various necessities of your life – the things you require to maintain your life and health, as well as to flourish and achieve genuine well-being. From the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and the house we live in to the books we enjoy reading, the ideas that inspire us, and all the many services we take advantage of every day, we depend on others for every single one of our comforts and joys ... and for our very survival itself. *(Pause)* Our lives would be truly impoverished without the innumerable benefits we derive from countless other beings every day of our lives ... Let your mind abide in this awareness of deep appreciation of interconnectedness for a while. [2:00]

4.6 As you contemplate the benefits received from such a wide range of different people, including countless strangers, open your heart so that a deep sense of appreciation and gratitude begins to arise in you, replacing whatever indifference or antagonism you might have felt toward others before. Let this natural feeling well up and permeate your entire being. [2:00]

4.7 Then contemplate this thought: *"Just as I feel happy when others wish me well, and feel touched when others show concern for my pain and sorrow, so everyone else feels the same way. Therefore I shall rejoice in others' happiness and feel concerned for their pain and sorrow."* [1:00]

Let your heart be permeated with a feeling of joy at others' happiness, and a sense of concern for their suffering, and abide in these tender, caring feelings for a while. [1:00]

Once again, recalling your profound recognition that others aspire to happiness and shun suffering the same way that you do, open your heart to rejoicing in others' happiness and empathizing with their pain. [1:00]

4.8 Now – having brought to your mind the fundamental recognition that, just as you do, all others aspire to happiness and shun suffering, as well as having reflected on the deeply interconnected nature of yourself and others – let your heart become permeated by the sense of a deep connection with others. **[0:45]**

On this basis, develop a sense of loving concern for others, taking sincere interest in their well-being. Then remain in this loving state of mind for a short while. **[1:30]**

Conclusion

4.9 Now, as this session draws to a close, let your heart be touched by this feeling of warmth, tenderness, and caring for others ... and rest your mind simply on the natural rhythm of your breath. **[0:30]**

[End of meditation 4]

WEEK SIX: Step 5 – Cultivating Compassion for Others

I. Overview and Class Plan

THEME: Widening the circle of compassion

- 1. Settling the mind and intention setting exercises** [10 min]
- 2. Check-in about the previous week's home practice** [10 min]
- 3. Pedagogy** (for details, see [page]) [20 min]
- 4. The "Eyes on" Exercise** (for the description, see [page]) [20 min]
- 5. Guided meditation on compassion toward others** (for the script, see [page]) [30 min]
- 6. Home practice** [5 min]
 - 20 minutes of daily meditation on compassion for others
 - As an informal practice, breathe in and breathe out compassion; direct compassion toward a stranger on the street and, if not too intrusive, look into his or her eyes, wishing that he or she be free from suffering.
- 7. Dedication** (for an explanation of dedication practice, see [page])

Explain the concept of "dedication" as a way of making positive aspirations. For example, participants could dedicate the time and energy committed to this course by thinking, *"Through becoming familiar with these compassion exercises, may I infuse my daily life with the power of compassion. May everyone's life be free of fear and anxiety; may everyone enjoy peace and joy."* Perhaps conclude this session with the reading of a poem.

II. Pedagogy

Cultivating Compassion for Others

Briefly review Steps 2, 3, and 4, and then introduce Step 5. This step involves the cultivation of compassion toward others—ideally, toward all beings. Review some of the definitions of what compassion is. Then explain how the actual meditation moves progressively from a loved one to a neutral person, then to a difficult person, then to all three of them together, and finally to all beings. Underline that, at each of these stages, the meditation involves four crucial parts:

- Picturing the object of compassion
- Thinking of a scenario of suffering and difficulty experienced by that person
- Wishing the person to be free of pain and sorrow
- Feeling this wish with all one's heart and fusing one's mind with it

Some of the key points to be made in this context of cultivating compassion for all others must include:

- A discussion of what compassion *is* and what it *isn't*. Discuss the possible misconceptions about compassion and clarify them. Compassion is not *pity*; it's not the *personal distress* one feels at the sight of someone else's pain, nor is it simply feeling for someone's pain and *feeling sorry* about it. Nor is compassion equivalent to *heroism*, although there could be a heroic form of compassion. Similarly, although there can be a form of compassion that involves *self-sacrifice*, in itself compassion does not entail personal sacrifice. What it does entail is openness to being moved by the sight of others' suffering, and responding to this sight primarily out of a deep sense of concern for the other, with no negative or self-referential judgment.
- The fact that compassion is boundless, and that by giving more of it, we create more of it. Compassion toward strangers does not dilute our love for our loved ones; it's not a zero-sum game, nor is it a case of a "family versus others" dichotomy. Just as a mother with more than one child is capable of loving all her children, so we can learn, through cultivation, to widen our circle of concern and extend compassion to an ever-expanding field. Although this notion of boundlessness of compassion might be initially difficult to grasp, if the key point that compassion primarily consists of engendering the wish for something better for others is deeply appreciated, it can be seen as an empowering quality. Furthermore, just as research in neuroscience is increasingly suggesting how, with respect to our neurons, there is the general principle of "*Use it or lose it*," so this is true of compassion. Qualities such as compassion are analogous to our muscles, which, if trained, can be developed. Hence the cultivation of these qualities is comparable to the acquisition and perfection of other skills.
- The fact that CCT practice does not advocate that one treat one's own loved ones as one would normally treat a stranger, but rather that one learn to relate even to a stranger at the level of basic humanity.

- The fact that compassion cultivation practice does not entail blurring the distinction between one's friends and foes; rather, it teaches a method whereby the fact that someone is a stranger or a foe does not automatically preclude the possibility of caring about his or her pain and sorrow.
- The fact that how you relate to someone – whether from the perspective of a differentiating category of friend and foe, or from the perspective of common humanity – affects how you treat that person. The Dalai Lama often cites the beautiful example suggested by a First World War photograph of an Allied soldier tending to an injured Turkish soldier during a brief interval in the fighting. The Allied soldier has not forgotten that the other soldier is an enemy, but during the interval he is able to respond, as a fellow human being, to the Turkish soldier's need for concern and care.
- The psychological and emotional effects of compassion – how when one cultivates compassion for others, the focus naturally shifts away from self and to others, thus expanding the horizons of one's vision. This immediately has the effect of freeing one from excessive self-concern, which generally tends to feel heavy and to make one more vulnerable to feelings of hurt and frustration.

Science for sixth psychoeducational module on cultivating compassion for others

- This week, it could be useful to reference:
 - i. Fears of compassion: Development of three self-report measures (Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, & Rivis 2011). *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*.
 - ii. Compassion, pride, and social intuitions of self-other similarity. (Oveis, Horberg, Keltner 2010). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
- Paul Gilbert and colleagues developed measurements of fears of compassion and collected data from a sample of over 222 students and 53 therapists in the UK. People who are self-critical, depressed, anxious, stressed, and insecure can be fearful of compassion. Fear of compassion for self is associated with fear of compassion from others.
- Oveis *et al.* 2010 conducted three studies to investigate the influences of compassion and pride on social cognition. Individuals who scored highly on trait and state compassion reported higher similarity between themselves and others, particularly regarding those seen as weak and vulnerable, whereas those who were proud felt they were more similar to strong others, with a diminished sense of similarity to those perceived as weak. Compassion increases our ability to identify with others and perceive similarities, increasing our ability to connect with those who are vulnerable or in need. Pride may in some cases raise barriers and lessen our ability to connect with those who are vulnerable or in need.

"Love thy enemy"

Most contemplative traditions advocate the possibility of extending love and compassion even to one's adversaries. From the Gospels' admonition to love one's enemy as one would love oneself to the Buddhist practice of seeing one's adversary as a spiritual teacher, the world's contemplative traditions envision the human heart to be capable of reaching such heights that, instead of

responding to harm with hostility and vengeance, one responds to the perpetrator with compassion and understanding.

Is such compassion just an ideal, or is it a possibility open to all of us? The Dalai Lama contends that, through deliberate cultivation and training, we can in fact move beyond the dictates of our biological inheritance of extending our love and concern to only a small circle of family and friends, and instead relate to all others at the basic level of humanity—the level where we recognize that we all equally shun suffering and wish for happiness, and that each of us deserves to fulfill this natural aspiration. Once we are able to do this, we can then extend our compassion even to those whom we might conventionally categorize as our adversaries. His Holiness suggests that, while maintaining our recognition of an adversary as a fellow human being and on this basis retaining our compassion, we can still firmly oppose the wrongs being done by that person. In other words, we can *oppose* the action while *respecting* the person who is committing that act. So compassion for an enemy does not imply giving in, nor does it suggest condoning what he or she has done.

III. The “Eyes on” Exercise

This is a pair exercise, so divide the class into twos. There are several ways this exercise can be performed, all of them involving the exercise partners looking deeply into each other’s eyes and listening to a guided visualization. One version of the exercise could be the following:ⁱ

- In this practice, we will start by having you turn your chair to face your partner directly. Bring your chairs close enough that each of you can see your partner’s face clearly.
 - Start by taking a good look at your partner’s face and notice every detail, including eyes, eyebrows, the shape of the cheeks and jaw, the color of the skin, the hairline, and so forth.
 - Now close your eyes and simply notice how you feel. Open your eyes, and while remaining silent, consider how your partner feels being seen, being the object of your attention right now. Now close your eyes and simply observe what you feel.
 - With your eyes still closed, consider that the person seated right in front of you, a fellow human being, has had many highs and lows in life, just like you. Consider that this person wishes to be free from confusion, angst, pain, and loneliness, just like you. This person wishes to be free from anger, hatred, and jealousy, just like you. Now open your eyes and really see your partner. Now close your eyes and notice what you feel.
 - With your eyes still closed, gradually generate the wish, *“May you be well, happy, content, and balanced. May you find the sources of love, openness, freedom, and mental clarity.”*
 - Open your eyes, look at your partner, and continue to offer the partner your wishes for his or her well-being. Close your eyes and notice what you feel.
 - Now open your eyes and thank your partner in this exercise.
 - Take a couple of minutes to discuss with your partner your experience of this exercise.
 - Finally, having rearranged the chairs and bringing the class together, have a group discussion about what people observed during this exercise.
-

IV. Meditation Script

Step 5: Cultivating Compassion for Others

Welcome to compassion cultivation practice. This is Step 5 in a six-step meditation process aimed at cultivating and nurturing compassionate heart and mind within us.

Defining compassion

Compassion is the *wish that others not suffer*, accompanied often by the *urge to help end the suffering of others*. When compassion arises in our heart, our mind is free from hatred, negative judgment, and obsessive self-focus. It opens our heart, expands our awareness, and engenders a feeling of tenderness that helps us connect with others. So cultivating compassion is a source of peace in our heart and mind.

Settling the mind

Choose a comfortable sitting posture and stretch your shoulders to release any residual tension. Then, when you are ready, take a series of five deep cleansing breaths, as we practiced before. As you do so, release all the worries and tensions of the day. [1:30]

Now, relax your control over your breath, allowing it to settle into its own natural pace, neither too fast nor too slow. Then, in silence, mentally count each cycle of breath, starting with “one ...,” “two ...,” up to “five ...,” and repeat this process of counting for a while. [1:00]

Then bring your attention into the present moment by focusing on the natural, rhythmic movement of your breath. Placing your focus on the subtle sensations just beneath your nostrils aroused by your breathing, let your mind rest on this movement of breath, simply observing the rhythm of in-breath and out-breath. Release yourself from any thoughts projecting into the past or any anticipation related the future. And settle into the only reality there is now: the present. Other than simply observing the present moment of your breath, give your mind a rest. Let it rest simply in the awareness of the gentle rhythm of your breathing. [1:00]

During the meditation, whenever you find that your mind has wandered off, gently bring it back to your breath, using the spot beneath your nostrils as a reference point.

Loving-kindness and compassion for oneself

Think of a time when you experienced great difficulty and suffered a lot. Notice how you feel when you think of such an experience ... How does your heart feel? (*Pause*) Then, with feelings of tenderness, warmth, and caring toward yourself, silently repeat these phrases:

“May I be free from suffering ...
May I experience peace and joy.” [1:30]

Then, with a firm recognition that aspiration for genuine happiness is an essential part of your being, silently repeat the following phrases:

“May I be happy ...
May I be free from suffering ...
May I find peace and joy.” [1:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that you may achieve happiness and freedom from suffering.

Step 5: Compassion toward others

Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one

With a relaxed but focused mind, picture someone for whom you feel a great amount of love. Notice the feeling of tenderness and warmth this brings in your heart and how this makes you feel ... *(Pause)* Now think of a time when this person was going through a difficult time. Notice how you feel a sense of concern based on a feeling of tenderness toward your loved one ... *(Pause)* Notice how you feel for his or her pain ... *(Pause)* ... and have an urge to reach out and help. **[2:00]**

Then, with these feelings and sentiments, silently recite the phrases:

"May you be happy ...
May you be free from suffering ...
May you find peace and joy." **[1:00]**

Feel with all your heart the wish that your loved one achieves happiness and freedom from suffering. **[1:00]**

Compassion for a neutral person

5.1 Now think of someone you neither like nor dislike, someone whom you see often but have no particular contact with, perhaps a classmate, someone you see at your workplace, or a bus driver, or someone who works at your local café. **[1:15]**

5.2 Reflect how, although you do not know this person well, just like you, he or she seeks love and happiness. Just like you, he or she has dreams, aspirations, hopes, and fears. On this basis, just like you, he or she lives her life, striving her best to fulfill these aspirations. Silently recite this phrase: "*Just as I do not wish to suffer and aspire toward happiness, so he or she also aspires to happiness and wishes to overcome suffering.*" **[2:00]**

Now imagine this person faced with suffering, embroiled in a conflict with a loved one, struggling with an addiction, or suffering deep sadness or depression. Then allow your heart to feel tenderness and concern for this person, and if possible, allow your heart to even feel the urge to do something about it. **[1:00]**

With these sentiments, silently repeat:

"May you be free from this suffering ...
May you experience peace and joy ...

"May you be free from this suffering ...
May you experience peace and joy." **[2:00]**

Feel with all your heart the wish that this person achieves happiness and freedom from suffering. And continue to silently recite:

"May you be free from this suffering ...
May you experience peace and joy ...

May you be free from this suffering ...
May you experience peace and joy." [2:00]

5.3 Notice how saying these phrases feels in your heart ... When thinking about this person's suffering, did you feel connected with him or her? Did you feel open, receptive, and tender toward this person? Did you feel a sense of concern for his or her needs and a wish to see this person be relieved from that suffering? [1:00]

Compassion for a difficult person

5.4 Next, bring to mind a person you have difficulty with in your life. This may be someone who you think has done you harm, or someone who you think takes satisfaction in your misfortune, or even a parent you had an argument with, or a colleague you cannot get along with. Vividly picture this person in front of you. [1:15]

Reflect how, although you may have negative feelings about this person, just like yourself, he or she is an object of affection and concern for someone, he or she is a parent or a spouse or a dear friend to someone. Just like you, he or she seeks love and happiness. Then silently recite this phrase: "*Just as I do not wish to suffer but aspire to happiness, so he or she aspires to happiness and wishes to overcome suffering.*" Let your mind abide in this awareness for a while. [2:00]

Now imagine this person faced with suffering, embroiled in a conflict with a loved one, struggling with an addiction, experiencing failure at work, or suffering from deep sadness or depression. Then allow your heart to feel tenderness and concern for this person, and if possible, allow your heart to even feel the urge to do something about it. [1:00]

With these sentiments, silently repeat:

"May you be free from this suffering ...
May you experience peace and joy ...

May you be free from this suffering ...
May you experience peace and joy." [2:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that this person achieves happiness and freedom from suffering. And continue to silently repeat:

"May you be free from this suffering ...
May you experience peace and joy." [2:00]

5.3 Notice how it feels in your heart when you say these phrases ... When thinking about this person's suffering, did you feel connected with him or her? Did you feel open, receptive, and tender toward this person? Did you feel a sense of concern for his or her needs and a wish to see this person be relieved from that suffering? [1:00]

Compassion for all beings

5.4 Finally, picture all three people together in front of you, and remember that they all equally share the basic yearning to be happy and to be free from suffering. On this level, there is no difference at all between these three people; in this fundamental respect, they are all exactly the same. *(Pause)* [1:00]

Then, with this acknowledgment of the equality of all three people in this fundamental respect, silently say the phrase:

“May you all be free from suffering ...
May you all experience peace and joy ...

May you all be free from suffering ...
May you all experience peace and joy.” [2:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that all these three people achieve happiness and freedom from suffering.

5.6 Now, in stages, expand the scope of your awareness from these three people to those around you, those living in the neighborhood, in the town, in the state, in the country, on the continent, and eventually encompassing the entire world. The aspiration for happiness and the wish to overcome suffering are what connect us with all these human beings. Reflect that, *“Just as I wish to be free from suffering, so, too, do all beings. Just as I wish for peace and happiness, so, too, do all beings.”* Let your mind abide in this awareness for a while. [1:00]

Feel with all your heart the wish that all beings be free from suffering, and silently repeat these phrases:

“May all beings be free from suffering;
May all beings be free from pain and sorrow;
May all beings be free from fear and anxiety;
May all beings experience peace and joy.” [2:00]

Infuse your mind with this feeling of compassion and allow it to fill your heart completely. [0:30]

Rejoicing in the glory of the open heart

5.7 Now embrace this open-hearted wish to see the easing of others’ suffering. And with your heart open, welcome the peace, happiness, and compassion this wish brings to your heart and mind. [1:00]

5.8 Let’s conclude this session by dedicating the positive effort of this meditation practice on compassion to the peace and welfare of all beings throughout the world. [0:30]

[End of meditation 5]

V. The Dedication Practice

The custom of doing “dedication” at the conclusion of a task, an event, or a session is an important aspect of contemplative practice in the Tibetan tradition. This plays a role analogous to the custom of “giving thanks” in the Judeo-Christian tradition, where at the conclusion of some important event, heartfelt thanks are offered to express one’s deep gratitude and appreciation.

A key element of dedication practice is to connect your thoughts and deeds—especially at the end of a deed—with the highest possible ideals and aspirations that you uphold, so that they transcend the narrow confines of self-concern and self-interest. This way, your thoughts and deeds acquire a dimension that is vast, limitless, and timeless. A metaphor that is often used to illustrate this point is this: If you pour some water into a vast ocean, so long as that ocean remains, some part of that water remains. In contrast, if you leave that water alone, soon it will dry up and will be gone. In essence, performance of a dedication is a form of letting your deep aspirations soar so that your highest ideals are constantly kept fresh in your mind.

Traditionally, dedication is paired with “intention-setting,” which is typically performed at the beginning of a task. So if intention-setting is like setting the path of your thoughts and deeds, dedication is like acknowledging and celebrating the fact that your thoughts and deeds indeed followed the projected path. This contemplative practice of beginning with *intention-setting* and concluding with a *dedication* is aptly presented in the Tibetan Mind Training slogan “*There are two tasks – one at the start and one at the end.*”ⁱⁱ

In brief, dedication practice involves (1) celebration or thanksgiving for a task done successfully, (2) connecting your thoughts and deeds with your highest ideals, and (3) strengthening your ideals and aspirations through conscious expression of your deep wishes.

In actual practice, the dedication can take various forms. For example, the instructor can read out to the class a selection of a few dedicatory lines. Alternatively, he or she can guide the class through a series of aspirations, or, after explaining the significance and the nature of the practice, ask participants to perform their own individual dedications in silence. An example of a group dedication the instructor can use is as follows:

“During these last several weeks, we have committed ourselves to cultivating our compassionate nature, spending time learning to nurture our qualities of empathy, caring for others, and connection with fellow beings. This is a truly noble goal. Imagine a world where each and every one of us spends time, energy and attention in such a pursuit! So whatever positive energy and force we may have created collectively through our efforts, let’s all wish together thus:

May peace and tranquility prevail in the hearts of all beings.

Through becoming familiar with these compassion exercises, may we infuse our daily lives with the power of compassion.

May everyone’s life be free of fear and anxiety; may everyone enjoy peace and joy.”

NOTES

ⁱ This “Eyes on” Exercise, including the step-by-step instruction, was contributed by Phillippe M. Goldin to the CCT program.

ⁱⁱ This is a line from the well-known “Seven-Point Mind Training.” See Shönu Gyalchok and Könchok Gyaltsen, *Mind Training*, p. 85.

WEEK SEVEN: *Step 6 – Active Compassion Practice*

I. Overview and Class Plan

THEME: Cultivating your altruistic nature; priming the generous spirit

- 1. Settling the mind and intention-setting exercises** [10 min]
 - 2. Check-in about the previous week's home practice** [10 min]
 - 3. Pedagogy** (for details, see [page]) [30 min]
 - 4. The "Breathe in, breathe out" Exercise** (for the description, see [page]) [20 min]
 - 5. Guided meditation on active compassion** (for the script, see [page]) [30 min]
 - 6. Home practice** [5 min]
 - 30 minutes of daily meditation on active compassion practice
 - As an informal practice, breathe in and breathe out compassion.
 - 7. Closing dedication**
-

II. Pedagogy

Active Compassion Practice

Briefly review the meditation in Step 5 and then introduce Step 6. This final step of the CCT program concerns “active compassion” practice. Such an introduction might include the following points:

- As we deepen our compassion for others, we develop a strong wish for them to be free of their suffering. Such a wish, when continually cultivated and enhanced, leads to an increased sense of urgency; we come to feel that we *want* to do something about others’ suffering. This is an active form of compassion, which is accompanied by a sense of personal commitment.
- This more active, personally involved form of compassion can be characterized as an *altruistic resolve*; it is a state of mind in which we experience a spontaneous and unconditional readiness to help others. Instead of merely wishing that others might be free of their suffering, we become personally involved and work to help ease their suffering and promote their well-being as much as we can.
- In this stage of the meditative cultivation of compassion, essentially what we are doing is reinforcing our desire to help others and preparing our minds and hearts to be ready to altruistically reach out to others in need.
- In brief, the key points to remember of these practices are: (a) to prime the generous spirit; (b) recognize that you have enormous capacity to help; (c) and that, building on the past few weeks, you follow this path: You connect with others, then you tap into the motivation, and then you *do* something.

“Giving and receiving” (tonglen)

One of the most powerful techniques for cultivating altruistic intention—that is, the heart of active compassion—is the meditation known as “giving and receiving” (*tonglen* in Tibetan).ⁱ This practice involves imaginatively “taking” upon oneself all the suffering of others, as well as the underlying causes of their suffering, and “giving” them all of one’s own happiness, joy, and good fortune. For example, we can visualize taking away from others their negativities and unhappiness in the form of dark clouds or dense fog, which we visualize as dissolving into our bodies. Then, as we give others all that is beneficial, these positive qualities emerge from our bodies in whatever visual images resonate with us (such as white clouds, bright rays of light, or soothing streams of nectar), all of which dissolve into the bodies of those whose suffering we have previously absorbed.

For some people, this particular meditation, especially the “taking” component, can at first be quite disconcerting. At the initial stages of practice, therefore, it can be helpful to imagine that the dark cloud embodying others’ suffering and the causes of this suffering is utterly extinguished in an orb of light at one’s heart. Furthermore, if we find it difficult to take on the suffering of others, it is recommended that we start by taking on our own future suffering and pain. For example, we can imagine taking on at this very moment the problems and adversities we might encounter sometime in the future. Once we have grown accustomed to doing this, we can gradually move to taking on the sufferings of loved ones, strangers, adversaries, and, finally, the sufferings of all sentient beings.

“Giving and taking” is a powerful practice that you can apply in the face of the suffering (especially the prolonged suffering) of someone you deeply care for, or even in the face of your

own suffering and difficulties. You could, for example, sit next to a person who is ill, especially when he or she is sleeping, and silently wish her respite from pain and imagine taking away her pain and suffering. If it feels comfortable, you could imagine sending the person all your strength, courage, and love, and silently offering the phrases, "*May you have strength; may you be free from fear and anxiety; may you be free from pain.*"

Similarly, when you find yourself undergoing great difficulty – whether it's acute physical pain, psychological pain such as disappointment and hurt feelings, or difficulty in a personal relationship – you can apply *tonglen* practice in the following way: Instead of denial, directly acknowledge the pain and make the aspiration "*Through this situation of mine, may many others be spared from experiencing such difficulty and pain.*"

Tonglen practice incorporates relieving others' suffering and difficulties, and giving them your gift of healing and well-being – with your breathing process. Breathe in, taking away from others their pain, suffering, and difficulties, and breathe out, sending to others your wish for warmth, happiness, and good fortune. This gift emanates from the intrinsic warmth and good nature of your heart.

It might be helpful to suggest to the class that, in the initial stage, if they find the idea of doing *tonglen* in relation to all beings too daunting or idealistic, what helps immensely is to look at the exercise *not* as you taking on and holding on to someone else's pain, but rather to look at *Tonglen* for what it really is -- as a process of *transformation*. You are taking in and offering up, lightening the darkness of suffering, and lightening the load of those who suffer with the transformative power of your heart. You are not holding onto their suffering for them, you are transforming it. It does not stay with you. You can imagine yourself as a transformative machine, cycling in the darkness and sending out light. Once this becomes stable, you can then begin expanding the sphere to include those in the neighborhood, the city or the town, the county, the state, and so on.

Finally, if the mood is appropriate, share with the class a poem that you find evocative of the generosity of spirit, such as "Wage Peace" by Judith Hill.

III. The “Breathe in, breathe out” Exercise

This exercise can be performed on the basis of grouping the class into pairs, or by the class collectively. It is adapted from the Tibetan Mind Training practice of “giving and taking” (*tonglen*), whereby, in concert with one’s in-breath and out-breath, one imagines offering joy, peace, and strength to others and taking away from others their suffering and the causes of their suffering. If practiced in pairs, guide the class in the following:

- Now let us group ourselves into pairs. Rearrange your chairs so that you are facing each other.
- Once comfortably settled, each of you should look tenderly into your partner’s eyes with a smile on your face....
- Now close your eyes and, as you breathe in deeply, imagine taking away all the pain, anxiety, stress, and worries that may be afflicting your partner....
- As you breathe out, imagine offering to your partner whatever is good in you—your joy, strength, confidence, and feelings of love and compassion....
- Once again, as you breathe in, imagine taking away all your partner’s suffering and also its causes....
- As you breathe out, once again imagine offering your partner all your own happiness and its causes....
- Now you breathe in....
- Now you breathe out....
- Now open your eyes, look deeply into your partner’s eyes, and allow your heart and mind to rest in whatever experience you may come to feel in that moment....
- Now, with each partner taking a turn, say to each other the following phrases:

*“May you be free from suffering, and its causes;
May you be free from fear and anxiety;
May you achieve joy and happiness;
May you achieve peace and freedom.”* [1 min]

IV. Meditation Script

Step 6: Active Compassion Practice

Welcome to compassion cultivation practice. This is Step 6 in a six-step meditation process aimed at cultivating and nurturing compassionate heart and mind within us.

Settling the mind

Sit in a comfortable position and stretch your shoulders to release any residual tension. Then, when you are ready, take a series of three deep cleansing breaths. As you do so, release all the worries and tensions of the day. [1:00]

Now, relax your control over your breath, allowing it to settle into its own natural pace, neither too fast nor too slow. Bring your attention into the present moment by focusing on the natural, rhythmic movement of your breath. Placing your focus on the subtle sensations of breathing, let your mind rest on this movement of breath, simply observing the rhythm of in-breath and out-breath. Release yourself from any thoughts projecting into the past or any anticipation related the future. And settle into the only reality there is now: the present. Let your mind rest simply in the awareness of the gentle rhythm of your breathing. [1:00]

Notice the quality of the in-breath – bringing the cool air in, letting it fill you, and the warm breath goes out. Sit calmly while you attend gently to these subtle sensations of the breath. Cool air in, drawn into your body, warm air flowing out....[1:00 min] Notice the transformation that is occurring – cool air in, warm air out. The air is warmed by contact with you body, by contact with your heart, with every cool breath in, your warm out-breath is an offering to the world. [1:00]

Now as you continue with this practice, imbue the out-breath with the wish to help, to heal, for others to find peace and joy. The warm air out is your offering to the world. Cool air in, let it fill you, and then send the warm air out, imbued with your wish to help others. [1:00 – 2:00]

The warmth from your heart is a bright, radiant light. Every out-breath you take sends the bright radiant, healing light from your heart. [1:00 min]

Step 6: Active compassion meditation

Focused on a loved one

6.1a Now, think of someone you love and care for. Identify with his or her sorrows and joys, and recognize that although what he or she wishes for is happiness, she lacks lasting happiness and is constantly subject to pain and sorrow. [0:30]

On the basis of the tenderness and sense of concern you feel for this loved one, let a compassionate wish naturally unfold in your heart to see your loved one be free of suffering. Enhance this feeling by imagining addressing this person directly:

“May you be free from suffering;

May you be free from pain and sorrow.”

Feel with all your heart the wish that he or she becomes free of pain and sorrow. [1:30]

6.1b Now imagine that this person’s suffering is a dark, black cloud. On your next in-breath, imagine that you can help relieve their suffering by drawing in some of that darkness. You can

lighten their load. As you draw in the darkness of your loved one's suffering, it dissolves completely into a pearl of radiant white light that is at your heart; this light represents the essence of all the strength and goodness in you. As his or her suffering dissolves into the radiant light, think that the dark clouds are completely extinguished. On the out-breath, send out that bright healing light from your heart, sending out the healing energy as an offering. Repeat this visualization for a while. [1:00]

Continue with this practice that links visualization with the breath: Use your breath and the warm healing energy of your heart to help relieve the burden of your loved one. You are *transforming* the suffering with the healing energy of your heart. Breath in the dark cloud suffering, let it dissolve into the radiant white light at your heart, where it is extinguished, and breathe out warm, healing bright light. [2:00]

6.1c As you continue to transform the suffering of your loved one, allow your heart to feel warmth and tenderness toward your loved one; addressing her directly, you may silently say these phrases:

"May you be free from suffering.
May you achieve peace and joy."

Feel with all your heart the wish that he or she achieves genuine happiness. [1:30]

6.1d Continue to imagine that -- with your out-breath -- you send out these wishes as a white, healing light. This light illuminate the darkness of your loved one's suffering, soothes your loved one's heart, bringing joy, strength, and happiness.

Continue with this cycle of breathing in your loved one's suffering as a dark black cloud and breathing out the healing energy of your heart. Visualize your out-breath infused with light rays emerging from your heart, sending this out to your loved one, bringing joy, strength, and happiness. [2:00]

Active compassion for those in the immediate vicinity

6.2a Now expand your field of awareness to include everyone in the immediate vicinity. Acknowledge that, just like you, they all wish to be free of pain and sorrow, and allow a compassionate wish that they be free of suffering to naturally arise in your heart. With this sentiment, silently recite these phrases:

"May you be free from suffering;
May you be free from and sorrow."

Feel with all your heart the wish that they be free of pain and sorrow. [1:30]

6.2b Then imagine that all their suffering emerges from them in the form of dark clouds, which you draw in with your in-breath. As you do so, they dissolve completely into a pearl of radiant white, radiant light that is at your heart, which represents the essence of all the strength and goodness within you, and are extinguished. This creates a brilliant reaction of light, with merges with your good intention and wish for others to heal, and on the out breath send out that healing, white light. Continue with this cycling of breathing in the suffering as darkness, transforming it with your own healing heart, and sending out the white healing light of your good intentions to help. [2:00]

6.2d As you continue to focus on the people near you, as you continue to relieve their burden with the transformative process of “giving and taking” you may generate these loving aspirations:

“May you all achieve happiness.
May you all experience peace and joy.”

Feel with all your heart the wish that they attain peace and happiness.
Imagine that, as a result of sending out these white clouds and light rays, they all receive renewed strength, joy, and peace, including genuine lasting happiness ... and rejoice in their peace and happiness. [1:30]

Active compassion for all beings

6.3a Now, expand your field of awareness to include *all* sentient beings without exception. Recall how, just as you do, they all aspire to happiness and wish to avoid suffering, and generate a sense of concern for their well-being. On the basis of this recognition, generate these compassionate thoughts:

“May all beings be free from suffering;
May all beings be free from pain and sorrow.”
Feel with all your heart the wish that all beings become free from pain and sorrow. [1:30]

6.3b Now extend the transformative process of *tonglen* to all beings. Imagine taking into your heart the pain and sorrow of all beings in the form of dark, black clouds, which are completely extinguished as they dissolve into the radiant pearl of light at your heart. On the out-breath send out that healing, white light. Continue with this cycling of breathing in the suffering as darkness, transforming it with your own healing heart, and sending out the white healing light of your good intentions to help all beings. [2:00]

6.3c As you continue to focus all beings, as you continue to relieve their burden with the transformative process of “giving and taking” you may generate these loving aspirations:

“May you all achieve happiness.
May you all experience peace and joy.”

Feel with all your heart the wish that they attain peace and happiness.
Imagine that, as a result of sending out these white clouds and light rays, they all receive renewed strength, joy, and peace, including genuine lasting happiness ... and rejoice in their peace and happiness. [1:30]

Rejoicing in the glory of the open heart

6.4 Now, gently release the imagery of *tonglen*, and simply reside in the feelings in your body [0:30] celebrate the peace, happiness, and compassion that this open-hearted wish to see the easing of other people’s pain and sorrow brings to your heart and mind. [0:30]

Let’s conclude this session by dedicating the positive effort of this meditation practice on compassion to the peace and welfare of all beings throughout the world. [0:30]

[End of meditation 6]

NOTES

ⁱ For a detailed presentation of the Tibetan *tonglen* practice in contemporary language, see Pema Chodron, *The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), chapter 9. For a description of this contemplative practice from its classical Tibetan source, see Shönu Gyalchok and Könchok Gyaltzen, *Mind Training*, especially pp. 335-54.

WEEK EIGHT: *Integrated Daily Compassion Cultivation Practice*

I. Overview and Class Plan

THEME: Integrating compassion into all of one's life

1. Settling the mind and intention-setting exercises [10 min]

Begin with breathing meditation, and proceed with the following three questions:

- *If anything were possible, what would I really wish myself and others to find in life?*
- *If anything were possible, how would I really wish myself and others develop as a human being?*
- *What would I really wish myself and others to offer the world?*

2. Check-in about the previous week's home practice [10 min]

3. Pedagogy (for details, see [page]) [30 min]

Summarize the topics of each of the previous classes briefly and have participants share what they have learned. This might involve briefly reviewing the course week by week and reminding the participants of the big ideas of each, as well as the associated formal and informal practices. Discuss how to integrate the various steps of the meditation practices and set up a daily practice, which some might wish to continue every day.

Note: Since this is the final week and you may not have the opportunity to meet with course participants as a group again, it might be useful to do the guided meditation immediately after your brief summary. This will give participants the opportunity to discuss points about the daily practice with you later in the last session, on the basis of having tried it at least once.

4. Guided meditation on integrated daily compassion cultivation practice (for the script, see [page]) [30 min]

5. Feedback about the course [20 min]

What was helpful, what wasn't, what could be different, and so on? Provide a standard form that the participants can fill out, in case some wish to give their feedback anonymously.

6. Conclude the course with a short dedication

II. Pedagogy

Integrated Daily Compassion Cultivation Practice

Briefly review all six steps of the compassion cultivation program and introduce the practice of this final week of the course. Explain that all the key elements of the six steps have been integrated into this complete compassion meditation practice, which could actually be used as a daily practice.

Since this is the final week, it might be useful to do the guided meditation immediately after this brief introduction so participants can discuss points about the daily practice later in the class on the basis of having tried it out once.

Even though this integrated practice is designed to be used daily and incorporates the essence of all six steps, it can be helpful at times to revisit some of the previous steps. For example, if you are finding it very hard to feel compassion for a specific person whom you have great difficulty with, it might be necessary to go back and practice Step 4 so that you can learn to relate to this person at the level of shared common humanity. Similarly, it can be helpful to spend some time focusing on the practices involved in cultivating loving-kindness and compassion toward yourself. Thus the instructor needs to explain how some of the specific steps can be, and at times should be, revisited. **It's important, therefore, for the instructor to remind the participants that they can tailor their daily integrated practice to their specific needs. For instance, sometimes they may need to focus on a particular person in their daily meditation on compassion.**

Science for eighth psychoeducational module on integrated daily practice

- It may be useful to reference the following article here:
 - i. Open hearts build lives: positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditations, build consequential personal resources (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, *et al* 2008). *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology*.
- The still incipient amount of research on the effect of compassion interventions points out that even relatively short inductions and practices of loving-kindness and compassion can make a positive difference in people in a neurological, mental, and emotional level, in community samples and clinical populations. Effects include an increase in positive affect, social connectedness, and well-being and a decrease in negative affect and anxiety.
- Mindfulness and compassion are practices/processes that support each other: Mindfulness provides perspective and space for compassion to flourish, and compassion is the feeling tone and attitude that supports mindful attention to the present.
- According to two studies done by American psychologists Barbara Fredrickson and Michael Cohn, which involved conducting a 9-week loving-kindness intervention with working adults and then following up with them, the more positive emotions one feels when one first starts meditating, the more likely one is to become a long-term meditator. But even if one does not continue meditating, it is possible that the positive emotions from loving-kindness meditations do have lasting effects.
- It is remarkable that while the pleasure of many pleasurable experiences fades and decreases over time, in Fredrickson et al.'s 2008 study, the pleasure and positive feelings one derives from loving-kindness meditations actually seemed to grow and increase their effectiveness over the two months of the original study, with the time spent on meditation leading to more positive emotions as time passed. The studies describe a cycle in which

building resources (like meditation), increases one's ability to experience positive emotions in daily life, which broadens awareness and paves the path for other positive life changes.

Maintaining a daily contemplative practice

Although maintaining a formal daily sitting practice is important if you wish to sustain the effects of this eight-week course, it is equally important to continue to creatively apply the various informal practices in your everyday life. Some of the key points that need to be discussed in relation to a daily practice include:

- What is the appropriate length of a daily formal practice? Ideally, 30-45 minutes to a minimum of 15-20 minutes per day.
- Discuss the fact that it is most useful to set aside a specific part of the day for formal sitting practice, such as immediately after brushing your teeth in the morning, or after breakfast but before you start your work day, or immediately after you get home from work. *Having a routine makes a difference.*
- Initially, it might be most convenient and effective to simply listen to a recorded guided-meditation instruction.
- As part of your daily habit, it is useful to set your intention for the day in the morning and briefly check in before retiring at night. Once you have briefly reviewed your day (it's important not to get caught in the details), do a dedication so that you round out the day on a positive note.
- Every now and then, read, listen to, or view stories of compassion and altruism that inspire admiration in you. Allow your heart to be moistened by such inspirations.
- Try always to respond to people and situations primarily from a compassionate stance. And when you witness others acting out of kindness, rejoice in their good deeds.
- Learn to enjoy being generous through constant practice.

III. Meditation Script

Integrated Daily Compassion Cultivation Meditation

Welcome to compassion cultivation practice. This is the integrated meditation that brings all the previous six steps together in the form of a daily meditation practice.

Defining compassion

Compassion is the *wish that others not suffer*, accompanied often by the *urge to help end the suffering of others*. When compassion arises in our heart, our mind is free from hatred, negative judgment and obsessive self-focus. It opens our heart, expands our awareness, and engenders a feeling of tenderness that helps us connect with others. So cultivating compassion is a source of peace in our heart and mind.

Settling the mind

1.1 Sit comfortably and stretch your shoulders to release any residual tension. Then, when you are ready, take a series of three deep cleansing breaths. As you do so, release all the worries and tensions of the day. **[1:00]**

1.2 Now, relax your control over your breath, allowing it to settle into its own natural pace, neither too fast nor too slow. Then, in silence, mentally count each cycle of breath, starting with “one ...,” “two ...,” up to “five ...,” and repeat this process of counting for a while. **[0:30]**

1.3 Then bring your attention into the present moment by focusing on the natural, rhythmic movement of your breath. Placing your focus on the subtle sensations just beneath your nostrils aroused by your breathing, let your mind rest on this movement of breath, simply observing the rhythm of in-breath and out-breath. Release yourself from any thoughts projecting into the past and any anticipation related the future. And settle into the only reality there is now: the present. Let your mind rest simply in the awareness of the gentle rhythm of your breathing. **[1:00]**

(During the meditation, whenever you find that your mind has wandered off, gently bring it back to your breath, using the spot beneath your nostrils as a reference point.)

Loving-kindness and compassion for oneself

Curious why the order has changed for this final, integrated version i.e. we began with loved one in all prior meditations and now begin with self.

2.1 Think of a time when you experienced great difficulty and suffered a lot. Notice how you feel when you think of such an experience ... How does your heart feel? *(Pause)* Then, with feelings of tenderness, warmth, and caring toward yourself, silently repeat these phrases:

“May I be free from suffering ...
May I experience peace and joy.” **[1:30]**

Then, with a firm recognition that aspiration for genuine happiness is an essential part of your being, silently repeat the following phrases:

“May I be happy ...
May I be free from suffering ...
May I find peace and joy.” [1:00]

2.2 Feel with all your heart the wish that you may achieve happiness and freedom from suffering.

Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one

3.1 With a relaxed but focused mind, picture someone for whom you feel a great amount of love. Notice the feeling of tenderness and warmth this brings in your heart and how this makes you feel ... (Pause) Now think of a time when this person was going through a difficult time. Notice how you feel a sense of concern based on a feeling of tenderness toward your loved one ... (Pause) Notice how you feel for his or her pain ... (Pause) ... and have an urge to reach out and help. [1:30]

3.2 Then, with these feelings and sentiments, silently recite the phrases:

“May you be happy ...
May you be free from suffering ...
May you find peace and joy.” [1:00]

3.3 Feel with all your heart the wish that your loved one achieves happiness and freedom from suffering. [0:30]

Compassion for a neutral person

4.1 Now think of someone you neither like nor dislike, someone you might see often but have no particular contact with—perhaps a classmate, someone you your workplace, a bus driver, or someone who works at your local café. [1:00]

4.2 Reflect how, although you do not know this person well, just like you, he or she is important in someone’s life. Just like you, he or she seeks love and happiness. Just like you, he or she has dreams, aspirations, hopes, and fears. Then reflect: “Just as I do not wish to suffer and aspire to happiness, so he or she aspires to happiness and wishes to overcome suffering.” [1:00]

4.3 Now imagine this person faced with suffering, embroiled in a conflict with a loved one, struggling with an addiction, or suffering deep sadness or depression. Then allow your heart to feel tenderness and concern for this person, and if possible, allow your heart to even feel the urge to do something about it. [0:30]

With these sentiments, silently repeat:

“May you be free from this suffering ...
May you experience peace and joy ...

May you be free from this suffering ...
May you experience peace and joy.” [1:00]

4.4 Feel with all your heart the wish that this person achieves happiness and freedom from suffering. [0:30]

Notice how saying these phrases feels in your heart ... When thinking about this person's suffering, did you feel connected with her? Did you feel open, receptive, and tender toward her? Did you feel a sense of concern for her needs and a wish to see her be relieved of that suffering? [0:30]

Compassion for all beings

5.2 Now contemplate this thought: *"Not only do I share with others the same fundamental aspiration for happiness and the same wish to overcome suffering, but my life and the lives of the countless beings on this planet are intertwined in a network of relationships on which I depend completely for my survival and well-being."* [1:00]

5.3 Consider the various necessities of your life. From the food we eat to the clothes we wear, the houses we live in, the books we enjoy reading, the ideas that inspire us, and all the many services we take advantage of every day, we depend on others for every single one of our comforts and joys ... and for our very survival itself. (Pause) Then reflect: *"Our lives would be truly impoverished without the innumerable benefits we derive from countless other beings every day of our lives."* Let your mind abide in this awareness for a while. [1:00]

5.4 As you contemplate the benefits received from such a wide range of different people, including countless strangers, open your heart so that a feeling of appreciation and gratitude begins to arise in you. Let this natural feeling well up and permeate your entire being. [1:00]

5.5 Feel with all your heart the wish that all beings be free of suffering, and silently repeat these phrases:

"May all beings be free from suffering ...
May all beings be free from pain and sorrow ...
May all beings be free from fear and anxiety ...
May all beings experience peace and joy." [2:00]

5.6 All these dear beings, each and every one of them, continue to be afflicted by pain, sorrow, and fear, even though what they aspire to is peace and happiness. Let your heart feel: *"How I wish that they were all free from fear and sorrow."* [1:00]

5.6 Infuse your mind with this feeling of compassion, and allow it to fill your heart. [1:00]

Active compassion meditation:

6.1 Now recall how, *"Just as I do, all beings wish to overcome suffering."* On the basis of this recognition, generate a sense of concern for their well-being and the wish that they be free of pain and sorrow. [0:30]

Feel with all your heart the wish that all beings become free from pain and sorrow. [0:30]

6.2 With this compassionate wish, imagine that the pain and sorrow of all beings emerge in the form of dark clouds and dull lights, which enter your body. As they do so, they dissolve into the radiant pearl of light at your heart, where they are completely extinguished. **[1:00]**

Imagine that, as a result of your taking away all their suffering, all beings become free from pain and sorrow. Rejoice in their freedom from pain and sorrow. **[0:30]**

6.3 While thinking of all beings, reinforce the recognition that, *“Just as I do, all beings aspire to happiness.”* On the basis of this recognition, generate the wish that they all experience peace and joy. **[1:00]**

Feel with all your heart the wish that all beings experience peace and joy. **[0:30]**

6.4 As you cultivate these loving thoughts toward them, imagine sending white clouds and light rays from your heart to all beings, giving them all your happiness and its causes — your joys, good fortune, and everything that is good in you. **[1:00]**

Imagine that all beings experience peace and happiness. Rejoice in their happiness. **[0:30]**

6.5 Now let’s do this active compassion meditation in concert with your breathing. Use your in-breath to alleviate others’ suffering and your out-breath to offer them your happiness, strength, and everything that is good in you. Breathe in ... pain and sorrow, and breathe out ... peace and happiness. **[1:00]**

Rejoicing in the glory of the open heart

Embrace this open-hearted wish to see the easing of others’ suffering. Rejoice in the peace, happiness, and openness and receptivity of heart that this compassionate wish brings to your heart and mind. **[0:30]**

We have now completed our compassion meditation session. With practice, this compassion cultivation practice may help you become more caring, open-hearted, and compassionate, bringing greater peace and joy to your life and to those around you. Thank you.

[End of compassion meditation]

Give a handout that outlines the structure and steps of the daily integrated compassion meditation practice.